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THE SOURCES OF THE MIDDLE IRISH ALEXANDER

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THE total mass of extant documents devoted in whole or in part to the life and deeds of Alexander of Macedon is so great in volume and so very diverse in subject as to prove a stumbling block to the reader who would pursue their history.¹ Especially is this true when we consider that the historical and legendary Alexander knew no bounds, either geographical or linguistic: his fame is recorded from Spain and Ireland in the west to Ethiopia in the south and Iceland in the north, while a recent publication by a Dutch missionary gives us an Indonesian version of the *Alexanderroman*.²

Now it is a well-known fact that almost all legendary accounts of Alexander must be ultimately referred, directly or indirectly, to a Greek prose romance of uncertain date attributed to an anonymous Alexandrian, now known as Pseudo-Callisthenes. His name has been found convenient to serve as a generic term for the various redactions of the Greek text and the tradition which it represents.³

But we are not concerned here with the Pseudo-Callisthenes tradition of the Alex-

ander romance. There are some non-legendary versions which are based on sober history. Thus Quintus Curtius Rufus is the source of the *Alexandreis* of Gautier de Chatillon (ca. 1178),⁴ which forms the basis of the Old Bohemian version (ca. 1265),⁵ and the Old Icelandic prose version by Brand Jonsson (ca. 1260),⁶ and the Middle Dutch version of Jacob van Maerlant (ca. 1260).⁷ The Old Spanish *Libro de Alexandre* ascribed to Berceo (fl. 1220-46) represents a mixed tradition, in having borrowed partly from Gautier and partly from Old French versions.⁸

The Middle Irish version presents a somewhat different problem, in that it has

¹ Ed. F. A. W. Müldner (Leipzig, 1863). Cf. also H. Christiansen, *Das Alexanderlied Walters von Chatillon* (Halle, 1905).

² R. Trautmann (ed.), *Die alttschechische Alexandreis* (Heidelberg, 1916). Cf. F. Lutzow, *A history of Bohemian literatures* (New York, 1899), pp. 18-25.

³ C. R. Unger (ed.), *Alexanders Saga* (Christiania, 1846).

⁴ J. Franck (ed.), *Alexanders Geste* (Groningen, 1882). This was later reduced to prose as *Die Historie des alre Grootsten ende machtichsten Coninc Alexanders*, ed. S. S. Hoogstra (s'Gravenhage, 1898-99).

⁵ Morel-Fatio (ed.), *El Libro de Alexandre. Manuscript esp. 488 de la Bibliothèque nationale de Paris* ("Gesellschaft für romanische Literatur," Vol. X [Dresden, 1906]). Cf. also R. S. Willis, *The relationship of the Spanish Libro de Alexandre to the Alexandreis of Gautier de Chatillon* (Princeton diss., 1934).

On the question of the Berceo authorship, cf. J. D. M. Ford, *Old Spanish readings* (Boston, 1934), pp. 137-40.

¹ F. P. Magoun, *The geste of King Alexander of Macedon* (Cambridge, Mass., 1929), pp. 28-62, gives a brief outline of the Pseudo-Callisthenes tradition of the Alexander legend.

² P. J. Van Leeuwen, *De maleische Alexanderroman* (Utrecht, 1937).

³ Magoun, p. 23.

no connection at all with the so-called "Pseudo-Callisthenes tradition" but derives in part from the sober history of chronicle writers, partly from the *opuscula* which were falsely attributed to Alexander himself, and partly from the antiquarian learning to be found in the writings of geographers and the scholia on classical writers.

Medieval Ireland was not without her cycle of romances: "De France et de Bretagne et de Rome la grant . . .," to quote from Jean Bodel's *Chanson de saisnes*, where "la matière de Rome la grant" included the whole of antiquity, the tales of Thebes and Troy as well as the story of Alexander. The purpose of the *Cycle of Antiquity* was to inform:

et cil de Rome sage et de sens aprendant,
if we interpret Jean's statement correctly.

Medieval man found his thirst for the miraculous, the strange, and the awesome somewhat satisfied in hearing retold the deeds of Alexander and the portrayal of the Wonders of the East.⁹ If we are to believe Robin Flower, the story of Alexander had come into Irish as early as it had come into Old English literature, but it was readapted at a later time.¹⁰ It is with this readaptation that we are going to deal.

The *Scela Alaxandir* is found in substantially the same form in two of the great *bibliothecae*, those repositories of Old and Middle Irish which were compiled from the twelfth century onward.¹¹ The

⁹ "Das Alexanderlied hat eine reiche literarische Vergangenheit. Die gewaltigen Taten des jungen Makedonierkönigs und seine Züge in die wunderbaren Länder des Ostens gaben schon den Zeitgenossen, mehr aber noch der Machwelt Anlass und leichte Gelegenheit, allerhand Sagen und Fabeleien mit den Berichten über die wahren Ereignisse zu verbinden" (H. Jantzen, *Dichtungen aus mittelhochdeutscher Frühzeit* [Berlin, 1926], p. 54).

¹⁰ "Ireland and medieval Europe," *Proceedings of the British Academy* (Oxford, 1927), p. 293.

complete text is to be found in the *Book of Ballymote* (BB), which was written about 1400, while a considerable fragment exists also in the *Leabhar breac* (LBr) (the "Speckled book"), which was copied somewhat later but which can be safely dated within the first quarter of the fifteenth century. One cannot date these texts with certainty because they were all copied from earlier manuscripts of varying dates and the medieval Irish scribe did not scruple to change verbal forms or even reshape the matter. In transcribing older texts, the scribe often modified the language to render it more intelligible, and, as scribes were frequently scholars proud of their learning, they sometimes deliberately inserted archaic forms or, worse, invented pseudo-archaic forms in their copies. Many of the texts with which we have to deal are of this strange type, a sort of mongrel which stands midway between the "glossen-irisch" of the eighth century and the spoken language of the Early Modern Irish period.¹²

The *Book of Ballymote* contains a great deal of heterogeneous matter: history, genealogy, homilies, saints' lives, grammatical treatises, etc.; and at the end of the volume are included a few tales from classical antiquity: the *Destruction of Troy* (partly from Dares Phrygius, partly from Vergil), the *Wanderings of Ulysses*, Vergil's *Aeneid* in a fair translation, and lastly the *Alexander*.

The exact relationship of the BB text and the LBr *Alexander* has not yet been determined. BB is more modernized, although written in an older book, and is indispensable to the present inquiry, as it is more complete. The LBr fragment is without beginning, as there is a page missing from the manuscript between

¹¹ J. F. Kenny, *The sources for the early history of Ireland* (New York, 1929), I (Ecclesiastical), 72.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 23.

folios 210 and 211. BB enumerates the sources of his work at the beginning and contains several folios on the *mirabilia* of India, not to be found in LBr. A later hand has added LBr material to the margins of BB, while LBr itself contains a marginal note which may clear up the question of their relationship. On folio 211 of LBr we have the following note: "agaid belltaine indiu hi Cluain Sostai Berchain dam ann oc scribend derid na staire (i. Alaxandir) for tus a liubar Berchain na Cluana."¹³ Now Berchan, who is also called "Berchan of the Prophecy" (*Berchan na Faistine: Berchan Profetans*) because he foretold the Danish invasions,¹⁴ was a monk of Scottish ancestry who flourished about 690(?) at Clonsast. Berchan's book is irrevocably lost, but it may well have been the source of the BB text also.

Kuno Meyer has dated the LBr version as of the eleventh century on linguistic grounds;¹⁵ but Stokes is inclined to disagree, basing his argument upon the occurrence of a gloss from the BB *Alexander* in a glossary contained in the *Yellow book of Lecan*.¹⁶ As a matter of fact, that glossary really contains two distinct strata, the first alphabetized in the AB-order to two places, concerned mainly with etymologies from Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. The second stratum is arranged in no other order except that of initial letters, contains a few etymologies of this kind, but is mainly a vocabulary of obsolete words with their later equivalents or interpretation.¹⁷

We must remember that a glossary of

this kind may easily receive accretions at any time down to the latest transcript. All we can say with certainty is that by the fifteenth century, when this glossary underwent its final redaction, the word *suma* (found both in the BB and the LBr *Alexander*) was already obsolete and required glossing.

The BB text of *Alexander* tells us the sources for the story:

adfetaim dia imtechtaibh 7 dia ghnimradaibh
fond uile domun co cumair o thosach co dered
amail ro scrib a lebraibh na scel 7 a lebraibh
natequitatus 7 isna cronicibh episdil Alax-
andair 7 isna hebislechaibh ro caemclae Alax-
andair re Dinimus re righ na Bragmanda 7 na
Serita . . . [fol. 488a, ll. 31-37].¹⁸

A marginal gloss in BB, fol. 488a (presumably from the now lost beginning of LBr), adds to our information: ". . . folgamsat hecnaid na n-Gaidil na scela sa Alaxandir a lebraib na scel 7 a lebraib na n-arsanta / 7 a croinicib 7 a Periges Prescean 7 a berla forais. . ."¹⁹ These sources are enumerated in the main body of the work. Thus Orosius is expressly mentioned four times (LBr: Nos. 23, 35, 41, 77). His *History* was studied during the Middle Ages in Ireland²⁰ as elsewhere and is the source upon which the Irish redactor leaned most heavily. The material is taken, for the most part, from Orosius' *Historia adversus paganos* iii. 12-23.

The so-called "books of antiquity" can refer only to the *Antiquities* of Josephus, as that author is named in LBr, No.

¹⁸ "I am telling of his expeditions and of his deeds throughout the whole world briefly from beginning to the end as was written in the books of tales and in the books of *Antiquities* and in the chronicles and the letter of Alexander and in the letters which Alexander exchanged with Dindimus king of the Brahmans and the Seritae" (author's trans.).

¹⁹ "The scholars of Irish learned the stories of Alexander from books of story and from the books of the ancients and from chronicles and from the *Periegesis* of Priscian and from the language of the foundation [i.e., the original language]" (author's trans.).

²⁰ Kenny, p. 142.

¹³ "It is May Day eve today: I am writing the end of the Story of Alexander here in Cluain Sostai Berchain from Berchain's book which is from Cluain" (author's trans.). This is the present Clonsast in the King's County. Cf. E. Hogan, *Onomasticum Goedelicum* (Dublin, 1910), p. 270.

¹⁴ E. O'Curry, *Lectures on mss. materials*, p. 412.

¹⁵ "Irische Texte," Vol. II, Part II, No. 6.

¹⁶ *Archiv für celtische Lexicographie*, I, 243.

¹⁷ Eoin MacNeill, "De origine Scoticae linguae," *Ériu*, II (1932), 113.

41, in connection with Orosius and Eusebius. We must, of course, postulate a Latin translation of Josephus as the immediate source of the redactor's information. Eusebius' *Chronicle* from the creation to A.D. 325 was to serve as a model for the annalists of the Middle Ages.²¹

Another source, Dionysius' *περιήγησις τῆς οἰκουμένης*, was translated into Latin by Priscian the grammarian in the fifth century. This work on geography is quoted once as a source (LBr, No. 33) and is the probable source of at least one other passage.

The *Epistle* of Alexander to his teacher, Aristotle, on the wonders of India was translated by the redactor *en bloc*. This work, known since the ninth century, provided medieval man with a knowledge of the marvels of the East. The *Correspondence* of Alexander and King Dindimus was recommended by Alcuin to Charlemagne as "required reading."²² We still have the dedicatory verses which he wrote his royal patron when he sent him a copy of that text in 781, along with the equally spurious correspondence of St. Paul and Seneca: Gens Bragmanna quidem miris quae moribus extat
Hic legitur: lector mente fidem videat.
Hic Pauli et Senecae breviter responsa leguntur:
Quenam notavit nomine quisque suo
Quae tibi, magne decus mundi et clarissime Caesar,
Albinus misit munera parva tuus.²³

These, then, are the sources which the Irish redactor mentions by name. Orosius' outline of Alexander's life and activities forms the basis of the narrative, with the other sources taking a subsidiary part where they are needed to fill out the story.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

²² Both these ninth-century Latin texts are edited in Friedrich Pfister, *Kleine Texte um Alexander-roman* ("Sammlung vulgärlateinischer Texte," Vol. IV [Heidelberg, 1910]).

²³ *Poetae Latini aevi Carolini*, ed. Dümmler (Berlin, 1881), I, 300.

The Irishman's translation of Orosius is very good, and we may attribute the mistakes in translation not so much to his misunderstanding of Orosius' Latin as to the probability of the corruptions in the manuscript that he was using. Thus he tells us at the beginning of the narrative that Alexander and his brother-in-law are to fight a duel in knightly fashion. This points to the reading *ludos* for *duos* in the original: "cum ad ludos magnifice adparatos inter duos Alexandros filium generumque contenderet . . ." (Oros. iii. 14). Again he tells us "he overthrew Tyre and Sidon and Carthage, and no prospect of friendly compromise was left to the Athenians, although he derived his origin from them" (No. 26). This is a misunderstanding of Orosius' Latin: "Then he overpowered and captured the ancient and flourishing city of Tyre, which, trusting in the support of its kinsmen the Carthaginians, opposed him" ("Tyrum urbem antiquissimam et florentissimam, fiducia Carthaginiensium sibi cognatorum obsistentem oppressit et cepit . . ." [Oros. iii. 16]). The Irish redactor translates *obsistentem* by *Aithenstu*. If he likewise confused Gordium and Sardis, he is not to be blamed, for an ancient annotator upon the text of Orosius perpetrated this error, as witness all extant copies of that author ("... diende Gorgien Phrygiae ciuitatem, quae nunc Sardis uocitatur" . . . [Oros. iii. 16. 5]).

Orosius tells us that upon Alexander's death, Cassander, son of Antipater, was placed in command of the bodyguards and companions of the king ("stipatoribus regibus satellitibusque Cassander filius Antipatri praeficitur"). The Latin nouns *stipator* and *satelles* are treated as proper names in both our manuscripts:

... sdipatores 7 sateli casandra in der in
rig diatarda for incedaib 7 for baictrianna . . .
[BB, fol. 499b, ll. 51-52].

Et Stipator et Saulites 7 Casandora in rig
doratait for Indecdaib 7 Bactriandaib [LBr,
ed. Kuno Meyer, ll. 1056-57].²⁴

However, similar mistakes occur in the translation from other sources: In a passage treating of the *mirabilia* of India we come across the description of bats as large as pillars:

... Donegaid dino eoin i nellaib iatlaind
mora .i. meit columbia . . . [BB, fol. 495a, ll.
25-26].

Dosneac iar sin eoin .i. iatlanna mora
comeit columnai [LBr, ed. Kuno Meyer, ll.
740-41].

This is obviously a misunderstanding of the Latin original, *Columbae*, not *columnae*, being the correct reading. The Leiden MS Voss. Q.20 of the *Epistola Alexandri* reads "columbis corpore aequales," while the Bamberg manuscript (Pfister, p. 27) has *palumbes*. Similarly, horned serpents of bronze could be found in the deserts of India, according to our texts of the Alexander, only because Latin *humidus* was translated by the Irish *umaide*.

Orosius iii. 23 mentions by name thirty field marshals to whom Alexander apportioned his conquered territory. Both Irish versions mention that there were thirty to whom the territory was given. BB, fol. 499b, l. 37—fol. 500a, l. 8, translates this passage quite close to the original Latin, with the exception that it, too, confuses *stipator* and *satelles* as names of generals as noted above. The LBr fragment, however, gives us first the names of the thirty generals, then later the territory over which they were placed. Misunderstanding of some of the Greek proper names leads to Marcus for Nearchus, Lessimanus for Lysimachus, Iuvenus for Eumenes, found in LBr, which differs again from BB.

BB begins with a brief summary of the

four world-dominions which preceded the Greeks. This is not unlike the beginning of the Irish *Lucan*, the *Cath catharda*,²⁵ partly a translation, partly a paraphrase of the *Pharsalia*. This synopsis was probably taken in brief from contemporary chronicles, which always gave a summary compendium of ancient history. The ancient Greeks, Socrates and Aristotle the philosophers, the first physicians—Apollo, Hippocrates, and Aesculapius—are passed in review before the sources of the *Imthusa Alaxandair* are given.

Alexander's birth was certainly no ordinary affair, but here we have none of the miraculous and prophetic element of the Pseudo-Callisthenes account. Philip's reign is quickly passed over, and upon his death Alexander takes the kingdom. Here the account follows Orosius in broad outline, always keeping Orosius' own numbers of horsemen, infantry, etc.

The LBr fragment begins in the middle of the description of Philip's army. Alexander's chief incitement to world conquest, it would seem, came to him in a vision which he had in a Macedonian town, Diho. Orosius, of course, mentions none of this, but we must turn to Josephus' *Antiquities* (xi. 333) to clarify the account. Josephus, telling of Alexander's visit to Jerusalem, said that he prostrated himself before the high priest who came out to greet him. When upbraided by one of his Greek generals, Alexander said it was not to him but to God that he was doing honor, for, while he was at Dium in Macedonia, God had appeared to him with his name inscribed upon the miter in the same manner as the high priest now appeared.

The Middle Irish account mentions only the dream at Dium but describes the vision in the same terms in which Josephus describes the high priest. Instead of the

²⁴ "And Stipator and Saulites and Casandora were the kings who were placed over India and Bactria" (author's trans.).

²⁵ *Cath catharda*, ed. and trans. W. Stokes ("Irische Texte," Vol. IV, No. 2 [Leipzig, 1900]).

name יהוה ("Yah'weh") on the miter, the Irish supplies native tradition. The names of the four letters were:

Anatolia the East,
Disic the South,
Artoc the North,
Misimbria the West.

These are the Irish interpretations of the Greek ἀνατολή, δύσις ἄρκτος, μεσημβρία, which, of course, spell ADAM. Medieval allegory loved to make out of Adam's name the four directions of the world, following an early pseudo-oracular Greek source. The *Saltair na rann*, a collection of Early Middle Irish poems from MS Rawl. B.512 in the Bodleian, has it:

co ro ainmniged iarsain
onacethri rétglaannaib,
Archon, Deissis, rot delb Dia,
Anatole, Missimbria.
Noimís lána, lathar ndil,
orohet Adam anmain, [ll. 1053-58].²⁶

An Anglo-Norman compendium of knowledge, *La petite philosophie*, a text of the thirteenth century, has:

en cel grazeis par altres nuns:
Anathole dist orient,
e Disis redist occident,
Aracon est septemtrium,
Messimbria le sur ad nun.
De ces quatre fu tresfurme
Le nun Adam, e aurne . . . [ll. 2276-82].²⁷

The Old English dialogue, *Salomon and Saturn*:

(Saturn and Salomon contended concerning their wisdom.)

SATURN: Tell me, whence was the name of Adam shaped?

SALOMON: I tell thee, of four stars.

SATURN: Tell me, what are they called?

SALOMON: I tell thee, Arthox, Dux, Arotholem, Minsymbrie.²⁸

²⁶ Ed. W. Stokes ("Anecdota Oxoniensia," med. and mod. ser. [Oxford, 1883]).

²⁷ Ed. W. H. Trethaway ("Anglo-Norman Text Society," Vol. I [Oxford, 1939]).

²⁸ Trans. M. Williams, *Word hoard* (New York, 1941), p. 166.

The vision told Alexander to "attack the East, Asia, you will subjugate the South, Africa, you will strike down the West, Europe, you will overpower the North, Scythia. . . ." The author follows Orosius, translating here, compressing there, now expanding the original at pleasure, but, in the main, following the historian through Alexander's conquests.

The Irish love for special figures, for long lists of names, for carefully described articles of clothing or the various kinds of precious stones shows itself here, even in the prosaic recital of the gests of Alexander:

Many nimble-handed fighters strode forward on both sides; a vast, very-large, daring, haughty, stubborn crowd for inflicting heavy blows . . . soles against soles and necks against necks. . . .

Plenty of bold, stubborn magnates were here united in close order in the sanguinary battle. Many heads with curled locks, wearing well-set broad-brimmed war helmets, were hewed off by the hard, sharp, crimson swords [LBr, chap. xi] [trans. C. Geisler, *Gaelic Journal*, V, No. 2 (1884), 214].

Here we have, in the middle of the Orosian account, two bits of information from Priscian's *Periegetes*:

Alexander was a full year near the river Micel, at the town named Debritae near an extraordinary well, for ice comes out of it every day and it is boiling with heat every night [LBr, chap. xxvii].

Hanc habitant iuxta Garamantes Debridæ clari

quæ superat cunctas urbs miro munere fontis;
frigore qui noctis fervet calefactus et umbris
at solis friget radiis glacialis et igni. [Priscian *Periegetes* 202-5].²⁹

Solinus, following Pliny's *Natural history* (v. 5. 36), also refers to the remarkable properties of this spring.

The Irish redactor cites Priscian as authority for Alexander's meeting with

²⁹ Ed. E. F. Corpet (Paris, 1845).

Behemoth, the savage dog of the Caucasus mountains:

Here it was where the dreadful dog came to Alexander, as Priscian relates in the *Periegesis*, and his name is Behemoth and this is his meal every day: inhabitants of the mountains: wild beasts, cattle and men [LBr, chap. xxxiii].

Unde canes nati superant genus omne ferarum, Magnus Alexander missum sibi viderat inde victorem barrique canem, rabidique leonis [Priscian 707-9].

Fear of this animal prevented Alexander from going to the Dead Sea.

The account follows Orosius as far as India, when the Irish scribe refers us to the *Epistola ad Aristotelem*. This again is partly translation and partly paraphrase on the *mirabilia* of India. Here LBr has a lacuna of several folios, containing only about half the *Epistola*. For the remainder of the treatise on India we must turn to BB. The description of the Ichthophagi and the trees of the Sun and the Moon with their prophecies and of valleys inhabited by serpents crusted with diamonds and emeralds must still be patiently deciphered from the facsimile.

But, if this is true of the *Epistola*, the next portion of our text comes down to us in three good manuscripts, for, in addition to BB and LBr, we have Oxf. Bodleian Rawlinson B.512, containing the *Correspondence of Alexander and King Dindimus*.³⁰ The *Collatio Alexandri cum Dindimo per litteras facta* consists of five letters exchanged between Alexander and Dindimus, Alexander beginning and ending the correspondence. The *Collatio* is, in short, an altercation between practical and speculative philosophy, under the guise of a Western monarch inquiring about Indian philosophy. Centuries before the composition of the *Collatio*, the Greek king Menander had used this same question-answer device when he inquired

into the tenets of Buddhism in the Pāli *Milindapanha*.

The inclusion of the *Collatio* in a story of Alexander's life would have had no place in the early Pseudo-Callisthenes account, but it was relished by the medieval mind, which sought some philosophical justification for Alexander's glory, pagan that he was.

After the correspondence closes, the redactor philosophizes on the meaning of prophecy. The question arises: Has an evil demon the power of prophecy which God would have? Biblical testimony is quoted as authority: "per angelos malos viam fecit semitam irae suae" (Ps. 77:50). Then follows a brief recapitulation of Alexander's short life: at twenty he took the kingship upon the death of his father, ten years he ruled over Greece and Macedonia, five years as emperor over the rest of the world, so that his over-all age was but thirty-five years ("ba garit tra re in ainiussa sin Alaxandir forsin dhmun"); short was his mastery over the world.

The Middle Irish account closes with a vision of the coming greatness of the Roman Empire—Alexander's fame was to be equaled only by that of Octavian Augustus. Aside from these three texts, we have no other Alexander material in Middle Irish literature, unless we include mention in various chronicles, histories, and genealogies.

I see no evidence for postulating an Old French *Alexander* for our Irish story, as Kuno Meyer once did (*Academy*, November 22, 1884). It seems that the Latin texts at our disposal give us an answer to all our questions concerning sources; but there does remain the problem of the speeches which are put into the mouths of the generals before the several battles. But if we cannot ascribe these to the *memoria* of the redactor, can we not lay them to his *ingenium*?

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³⁰ Ed. Kuno Meyer, *Anecdota from Irish manuscripts*, V (1913), 1-8.

A NOTE ON THE RHETORIC OF SPENSER'S "DESPAIR"

ERNEST SIRLUCK

SPENSER's treatment of Redcross's encounter with Despair has attracted, as it has merited, very great praise, and for nothing more than for the extraordinarily skilful rhetoric with which Despair almost succeeds in tempting Redcross to suicide. Despite this attention, however, it does not appear that the basic device governing Despair's rhetoric has been recognized by Spenserian scholarship. This is the more curious since, like most really effective rhetorical tricks, it is as simple as it is bold, and since Spenser went to some pains to make its nature clear. One ventures to think that it was instantly recognized by those generations of readers who, like Spenser's contemporaries, were accustomed to thinking of last things in terms of Christian theology.

It consists quite simply in the suppression of one of a pair of essential terms (mercy) in the Christian equation of judgment, and the representation of the other (justice) as constituting the whole relation of God to human conduct.

The position of the episode is designed to draw attention to the missing term. It follows the rescue of Redcross from the dungeon of Orgoglio, an action which Spenser introduces as an instance of the necessary, and frequent, intervention of "heavenly grace" in the sin-fraught life of even the righteous man (*Faerie queene* I. viii. 1). It is itself succeeded by Redcross's sojourn in the House of Holiness, where his regeneration is accomplished and his future sanctification revealed. This revelation takes place on the Mount of Contemplation, which is compared successively to Mount Sinai, where Moses received

writt in stone

With bloody letters by the hand of God,
The bitter doome of death and balefull mone
[x. 53],

and to

that sacred hill, whose head full hie,
Adorn'd with fruitfull Olives all arownd,
Is, as it were for endlesse memory
Of that deare Lord who oft thereon was fownd,
For ever with a flowring girlond crownd . . .
[x. 54].

(If Spenser goes on to make a third comparison, this time with Mount Parnassus, it is of interest only in connection with his conception of the function of poetry, and does not obscure the significance of his implicit distinction between the Law and the Gospel.) From this mountain, Redcross is able to see

The new Hierusalem, that God has built
For those to dwell in that are chosen his,
His chosen people, purg'd from sinfull guilt
With pretious blood, which cruelly was spilt
On cursed tree, of that unspotted lam,
That for the sinnes of al the world was kilt . . .
[x. 57].

Having insured that the term to be suppressed by Despair is present in the mind of the reader both before and after the temptation, Spenser, who is never afraid of being obvious, alerts the reader to expect a clever fraud. Trevisan has told Redcross of Despair's late success in tempting the lovesick Terwin to suicide. Redcross is incredulous:

How may a man, (said he) with idle speach
Be wonne, to spoyle the Castle of his health?

Trevisan's reply is to emphasize the guile of Despair:

I wote, (quoth he) whom triall late did teach,
That like would not for all this worldes wealth:
His subtile tongue, like dropping honny,
mealt'th
Into the hart, and searcheth every vaine,
That ere one be aware, by secret stealth
His powre is reft, and weaknesse doth remaine.
O never Sir desire to try his guilefull traine
[ix. 31].

With this preparation of the reader, then, Spenser confronts Redcross with the terrifying Despair. Redcross, who even after his instruction in the House of Holiness will remain predominantly a man of his hands, proceeds at once, "with fire zeale," to furnish his antagonist with the information about himself and his modes of thought which the latter needs if he is to destroy him:

Thou damned wight,
The author of this fact, we here behold,
What iustice can but iudge against thee right,
With thine owne bloud to price his bloud, here
shed in sight [ix. 37]?

Despair is prompt to accept this cue and to exonerate himself from blame in terms of the "justice" with which Redcross is evidently preoccupied:

What frantieke fit (quoth he) hath thus distraught
Thee, foolish man, so rash a doome to give?
What iustice ever other iudgement taught,
But he should die, who merites not to live?
None else to death this man despayring drive,
But his owne guiltie mind deserving death.
Is then uniust to each his due to give [ix. 38]?

The subtlety with which he moves from this distorted version of the nature of justice to the representation of death as attractive to mankind in general, thence to the representation of Redcross's avenging zeal as disguised envy of the suicide, and, finally, to the representation of the imputed attractions of death for Redcross personally, has been sufficiently noticed

elsewhere and need not concern us here. What is of interest for our purpose is Redcross's reply. It is, certainly, Christian in intention, but it is so incomplete as to be quite unavailing, since it emphasizes duty without supplying the term to balance justice and make the performance of duty possible for man:

The terme of life is limited,
Ne may a man prolong, nor shorten it;
The souldier may not move from watchfull
sted,
Ne leave his stand, untill his Captaine bed
[ix. 41].

Again, it is unnecessary for us to attend the skill with which Despair avoids Redcross's consequence by employing terms (e.g., fate, necessity, destiny) originally pagan, but loosely embraced, and susceptible of being loosely interpreted, by Christianity. Our interest is in his return to what purports to be a specifically Christian argument. This is simply the application to Redcross's own case of the double proposition that all human life must be sinful and that sin will be punished; with this goes, of course, the evil interpretation of Redcross's adventures:

The lenger life, I wote the greater sin,
The greater sin, the greater punishment:
All those great battels, which thou boasts to
win,
Through strife, and bloud-shed, and avengement,
Now praysd, hereafter deare thou shalt repent:
For life must life, and bloud must bloud repay.
Is not enough thy evill life forespent?
For he, that once hath missed the right way,
The further he doth goe, the further he doth
stray [ix. 43].

This is followed by a stanza urging the advantages of suicide.

It was probably at this point that the contemporary reader became aware of the nature of Despair's deceit. He was accus-

tomed to being told that the old rigorous law that "life must life, and bloud must bloud repay" had been abrogated, and that it was never too late for him who had "missed the right way" to return to it. However, should he have missed this hint, it was no great matter: he could not have failed to take the next one. Despair, digressing from the purportedly Christian argument, adds to it the contention that Redcross is peculiarly subject to misfortune:

Thou wretched man, of death hast greatest need,
If in true ballance thou wilt weigh thy state:
For never knight, that dared warlike deede,
More lucklesse disaventures did amate:
Witness the dongeon deepe, wherein of late
Thy life shut up, for death so oft did call;
And though good lucke prolonged hath thy date,
Yet death then, would the like mishaps forestall,
Into the which hereafter thou maiest happen fall [ix. 45].

It was unnecessary that the reader should remember that Redcross's "disaventures" had nothing to do with bad luck. He need only recall that the rescue from the dungeon of Orgoglio had nothing to do with good luck; and this he could hardly fail to do, so heavily had the preceding canto emphasized that it was an act of "heavenly grace." We may safely take it, then, that here, if not earlier, the contemporary reader recognized the nature of Despair's fraud, and was able to observe both it and its effect upon Redcross from a point of vantage. (That Redcross does not himself perceive the speciousness of the argument is not, of course, due to any ignorance of the missing term—Redcross is a Christian. But his Christian discipline is incomplete. He has not yet learned to contemplate, and therefore does not fully comprehend, the nature of "heavenly

grace," and his knowledge of it is too attenuated and remote to be operative when his attention has been captured and his emotions directed by Despair's rhetoric.)

Despair, having added the weight of his digression to his main argument, then contends, with great eloquence and effect, that Redcross's has been a life of dreadful iniquity. There has, indeed, been enough that, strictly judged, was reprehensible in it; enough to make it seem to Redcross's tender conscience, thus under the influence of Despair, that he is in truth a "man of sin." With his victim thus distraught, Despair thinks it safe to consummate the tendency of his rhetoric: he erects into the whole criterion of divine judgment the "justice" with which he began, and makes the hopelessness of such a system the basis for the direct temptation:

Is not he iust, that all this doth behold
From highest heaven, and beares an equall eye?
Shall he thy sins up in his knowledge fold,
And guiltie be of thine impietie?
Is not his law, Let every sinner die:
Die shall all flesh? What then must needs be donne,
Is it not better to doe willinglie,
Then linger, till the glasse be all out ronne?
Death is the end of woes: die soone, O faeries sonne [ix. 47].

Redcross succumbs, and moves to stab himself.

At this point Una, who has not hitherto participated in the debate, intervenes sharply and decisively. She has only one brief point to make, and the moment she has made it Redcross is safe: she need only supply the suppressed term and restore the Christian formulation of the equation of divine judgment:

Come, come away, fraile, feeble, fleshly wight,
Ne let vaine words bewitch thy manly hart,
Ne divelish thoughts dismay thy constant spright.

In heavenly mercies hast thou not a part?

Why shouldst thou then despeire, that chosen
art?

Where iustice growes, there grows eke greater
grace,

The which doth quench the brond of hellish
smart,

And that accurst hand-writing doth deface
[ix. 53].

That is all there is to the famous rhetoric of Despair: a simple trick, executed with consummate skill and artistry. But it is not a trick chosen arbitrarily by Spenser. Religious melancholia leading to despair and suicide was a phenomenon sufficiently common in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (and sufficiently noticed by modern scholars). Spenser is here concerned to show that its most characteristic and dangerous cause was the failure to comprehend (or to remember) the Christian doctrine of the nature and function of the Law of the Old Testament. Briefly, it is this. The keynote of the Covenant of the Law is justice. That Covenant offers salvation to any who will fulfil the whole duty of the Law, and prescribes damnation for those who do not. But the fact is that sinful man is incapable of fulfilling the whole duty of the Law, and must therefore expect to be justly damned. The divine purpose in establishing the Covenant was to let man's own experience persuade him of this truth, thus to teach him that he could not achieve salvation by his own efforts and that, if he was to be saved, he must rely entirely upon divine redemption. The Covenant of the Law is thus the "type" which both shows the need and foreshadows the nature of its "anti-type," the Covenant of Grace, of which the keynote is mercy. This new Covenant abrogates the old, not as duty but as law (the regenerate are enabled, by the operation of grace within them, to fulfil what is otherwise impossible, the duty

of the Law). Therefore, the thing to remember for the Christian who would otherwise despair of satisfying the requirements of divine justice is that these requirements are impossible of satisfaction by humans, but have been eternally satisfied by the Divine Redeemer and that because of Him men of faith live, not under the dispensation of justice, but under that of mercy.

This reading of Spenser's effort to bring comfort to the wayfaring Christian sensible of having departed from the right way may receive some support from a comparison with the statement of that other Christian poet who proclaimed Spenser a better teacher than Scotus or Aquinas. Adam does not understand why "so many and so various Laws are [to be] given" to men:

To whom thus *Michael*. Doubt not but that sin
Will reign among them, as of thee begot;
And therefore was Law given them to evince
Their natural pravitie, by stirring up
Sin against Law to fight; that when they see
Law can discover sin, but not remove,
Save by those shadowie expiations weak,
The blood of Bulls and Goats, they may conclude

Some blood more precious must be paid for
Man,

Just for unjust, that in such righteousness
To them by Faith imputed, they may finde
Justification towards God, and peace
Of Conscience, which the Law by Ceremonies
Cannot appease, nor Man the moral part
Perform, and not performing cannot live.
So Law appears imperfet, and but giv'n
With purpose to resign them in full time
Up to a better Cov'nant, disciplin'd
From shadowie Types to Truth, from Flesh to
Spirit,
From imposition of strict Laws, to free
Acceptance of large Grace, from servil fear
To filial, works of Law to works of Faith [*Paradise lost*, XII, 285-306].

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A SPANISH HAMLET

ELMER EDGAR STOLL

QUITE recently a book on *Hamlet*¹ has appeared from the pen of Don Salvador de Madariaga, the statesman, man of letters, and scholar. On this subject his principal virtue as a critic, I venture to say, is negative: he does not sentimentalize the hero, as English, German, and American critics and scholars have been prone to do, ignoring or slighting his indecency, harshness, and atrocity. In fact, the critic has here gone to the other extreme; and yet, like many of his predecessors, he also has taken too little account of Shakespeare's merely re-writing and somewhat hastily or carelessly readjusting a then popular blood-and-thunder tragedy—now lost to us but founded on a familiar legend, itself full of atrocity—as well as too little account of Senecan or Elizabethan tragic and comic traditions or conventions. When it is rightly taken, the Prince remains what Mr. Santayana has called him, “a great gentleman”; “charming and chivalrous,” as Chesterton has said.

Personally, I beg leave to associate myself with the *London times*² reviewer in what he has to say of the eminent Spaniard's raid into *Hamlet* criticism: “The hero presented by this new venture into realism is an unscrupulous Borgia, indecent as cruel, who has been cheated of a throne. It is the cheat that weighs upon his spirit, not the murder of his father nor the marriage of his mother (incest in that era)—mere pretexts for revengeful designs.” He is made, moreover, entirely

“egocentric”; and when at last he kills Claudius, it is not to avenge his father but, in the Spaniard's own words, “because Claudius meant to kill *him*” (p. 102).

As the critic develops this strange and repellent conception, however, he has, the *Times* reviewer would probably acknowledge, himself a virtue, even that which alone he demands of the hero as a work of art. “At the outset,” says the reviewer, “he challenges what is accepted to be at the core of tragedy: ‘Admiration for the hero is by no means necessary for the tragedy—nor even respect.’”³ What is necessary is coherence in the character.” In himself this Spanish Hamlet is pretty coherent, though not coherent with the Hamlet of Shakespeare. When he kills Polonius, for instance, it is “the irrational reaction less of actual fear [not that by any means!] than of a too close approach to the sacred self” (p. 22); and just so, before that (p. 19), it is imagined that he later brings about the deaths of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Shakespeare's hero, on the other hand, enjoying the admiration or esteem of all the other persons in the play, even of Claudius and Laertes, is therefore meant to enjoy that of the audience. He seems certainly to have done so. “That piece of his, the *Tragedy of Hamlet*,” says the Earl of Shaftesbury in

¹ Cf. the Croisets as they interpret Aristotle, contrasting in this regard Sophocles with Euripides: “*Ses personnages principaux, malgré les défauts qu'il leur prête à dessein, ont tous un air de noblesse et de grandeur. Le motif fondamental qui les inspire est généreux*” (*Litt. grecq.*, III, 264). And Aristotle and the Croisets alike would, of course, have included Aeschylus. The later kindred spirits in tragic poetry, English, French, or (for that matter) Spanish, as well as the critics who have followed Aristotle in requiring heroes worthy of admiration, such as Boileau and Dryden, need not here, I suppose, be cited.

² *On Hamlet* (London, 1948).

³ July 3, 1948. From the advertisements it would appear that by other reviewers it has been received very differently.

1710, "which appears to have most affected English hearts, and has perhaps been oftenest acted of any which have come upon our stage." And as for the coherence in Hamlet himself, to which Sr. de Madariaga says he has found "the key" (p. 12), why, since the day of the American Richard Grant White, there have been critics who recognized that Shakespeare did not write *dramas à thèse* like Frenchmen or (in some measure) Ben Jonson; and there were three, so differently gifted as Ten Brink, Bridges, and Shaw,⁴ who perceived that, taking over an old story, Shakespeare "made the hero superior to his actions, the art being to create a kind of contrast between the two," the hero's individuality lying more in his attitude and temperament, tone and accent, rhythm and imagery, than in what approaches a psychological construction.

As for the sources and the conventions which Sr. de Madariaga ignores, the atrocity troubling (or, rather, engrossing) him is, of course, not that of vengeance for a father's death, which, as a compatriot of Lope and Calderón, the critic can readily understand to be a sacred duty. It is the treatment of Polonius and Ophelia, of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern: the hero shows too little regret for the mistaken killing of the Counsellor and none at all for the intentional killing of the emissaries. But both situations appear in the seventeenth-century *Bestrafte Brudermord* (which derives from the original, now lost, by Thomas Kyd) as well as in Belleforest and Saxo; and in Shakespeare, as there, the parties killed are presumed by the hero to be enemies, the one man spying upon him, the others bearing letters "quas alienae cladis instrumentum putabant"—"la meschanceté des courtisans qui le con-

duisoient à la boucherie."⁵ The difficulty for us is that, as sometimes elsewhere in his re-writing, Shakespeare himself took too much for granted, and in this familiar story (whether as off the stage or on it) did not (for us) sufficiently indicate malicious treachery on the part of Polonius (if in him Hamlet really suspects it) and of the ambassadorial pair. In the plenitude of his material, he in these cases contents himself too easily with Kyd's summary justice of the biter bit, the tables turned:

Whom I will trust as I will adders fang'd

... and 't shall go hard

But I will delve one yard below their mines
And blow them at the moon.

There is a bigger difficulty, however, for us of today, as not for the Elizabethans. The Hamlet story was familiar not only as already on the stage but, before that, as a legend; and on the stage, before Shakespeare took it over, it had become positively mythical by the addition of a ghost disclosing the murder and demanding revenge. In England there was at this time or for long before no *justitiam*. Here, then, there is no realism; and for legend or myth allowances were to be made and by an audience instinctively would be made, as in ancient times for Achilles sacrificing human beings, Hercules sacking cities and hurling people over the cliff, Orestes killing his mother, Agamemnon his daughter, Oedipus cursing his sons and blinding himself; or, indeed, for Joshua at Jericho, Samson at Ashkelon, Jephtha sacrificing his daughter, David winning Michal or Bathsheba,

⁴ Cf. W. W. Lawrence, "Hamlet's sea voyage," *PMLA*, LIX (March, 1944), 55. Sr. de Madariaga (p. 19) seems to think Hamlet, because of the "personal aggression," capable of killing the two courtiers "even though he knew them to be innocent." The critic quite ignores Act V, scene 2, ll. 57-58, as well as Act III, scene 4, ll. 205-10, the delving "one yard below their mines," and, in both cases, the matter of self-defense.

⁵ Bridges, *Influence of the audience* ("Stratford Town ed.," 1904); Shaw, Preface to *Back to Methuselah* (1921).

Elijah disposing of the four (or perhaps eight) hundred and fifty prophets of Baal by the brook, not to mention the Lord himself "entering into the spirit of Satan's atrocious proposal," as Professor Murray puts it, to try the patience of Job. Hercules, repeatedly on the Athenian stage, is, as Dr. Bowra says, "not to be judged by humanitarian standards." "His legend dates from an heroic past . . . he stands outside ordinary rules of behavior."⁶ Like Hamlet twice, he hurls or strikes on insufficient evidence. Somewhat the same is to be said of the others mentioned, and without the atrocities a play bearing any of these names would have been a grievous disappointment. Hamlet must by mistake kill Polonius, must turn the tables on the wagtail pair; and possibly some of Kyd's or Shakespeare's spectators may even have taken it a little amiss that at the end the hero does not, as in the legendary original, burn the palace down, with all his enemies (here much more numerous) in it.

The treatment of Ophelia is another matter, and more complicated. It is to be admitted that the hero, too disrespectfully handling the father of the woman he loves (or has loved) before his death, considers too little her sufferings afterward; and that in the nunnery scene he is outwardly discourteous and ruthless toward her, in the "Mousetrap" one is unclean. On both occasions, however, we must remember he is playing mad; and, as I have elsewhere said, his apparent brutality is partly to mislead or mystify her and (perhaps) the hidden listeners—encourage them in the notion that he is mad for love—partly to warn her of her danger, partly to wreak himself on one who has jilted or deserted him, is, with her

prayer-book, obediently deceiving him, and is of the same sex—though not the same "frailty"—as his mother. Here and afterward, moreover, we must remember Courtney's principle that "considerations which are not suggested to the audience are considerations which do not exist for them"; and also another, which may be a corollary, that they should not be conjured up out of nonentity by the reader: If Hamlet hasn't her on his mind, we haven't her on ours. She is kept subordinate and is not permitted to touch us too nearly. She is delicate, but in the distance. Her grief is not presented to us immediately and directly but only by way of her poetically treated distraction, and that seems to be mainly for her unheroic father. The Prince's unconcern for the maiden's filial feelings is a negative matter to which our attention is not called. . . . In Shakespearean and other Elizabethan drama the character does not much reside in the implications of the action; and this is especially true of what, without comment, is *not* done—Macduff's and Polixenes' taking no thought for the safety of wife and child or of the lady, Emilia's and Banquo's silence and acquiescence, the young lovers' showing no concern (as Romeo and Juliet, Desdemona and Imogen show none) for the unhappiness of their parents.⁷

Sr. de Madariaga, however, thinks Hamlet cruel by nature. Shakespeare, it would seem, is too much for him; and he ought perhaps in dealing with "Nordic" poets to confine himself to those with "the literary conscience," by whom, as in our time, for a year or even a decade, every line or word in a poem is, duly or unduly, pondered and appraised. He fails to keep in mind not only that this is a play hastily re-written and somewhat loosely readjusted but also that here as well as elsewhere Shakespeare lets characters break out impulsively, even over the limits of the role. The critic quotes

⁶ Murray's *Aeschylus* (New York, 1940), p. 93. Joshua 6:21; Judges 14:19; Bowra's *Sophoclean tragedy* (Oxford, 1944), pp. 132-33.

⁷ Stoll, *Shakespeare and other masters* (Cambridge, Mass., 1940), p. 179.

Unhand me, gentlemen,
By Heaven, I'll make a ghost of him that lets
[stops] me

as proof that Hamlet, "when it comes to doing what he is determined to do, will not hesitate to kill even his closest friend" (p. 14). The analytical Spaniard is himself too rigidly coherent—too intolerant of reality and its free-and-easy intercourse—for the all-embracing Englishman; and that remark his Cervantes, I think, more akin to Shakespeare, would not have made. Indeed, the critic is here, as elsewhere, too regardless of the situation. Provided that one does not accept this doctrine that the hero is intensely egocentric and innately cruel, what could be dramatically more apposite than the outcry, or more in Hamlet's own reckless jesting vein, now as he breaks away to follow the beckoning of his father's ghost? In circumstances so unusual, well-nigh any spirited chap might have said something like it; but, above all, in the throes of his suspicion, Hamlet. Had he not exclaimed, an hour or so earlier as he heard the news,

I'll speak to it, *though hell itself should gape*
And bid me hold my peace,

and a minute before the present moment,

Why, what should be the fear?

I do not set my life at a *pin's fee*. . .

And there is here the same sort of verbal retort⁸ and freakish inclination to far-flung pleasantry—up to Heaven or down to St. Patrick—in the midst of grief and excitement as in the wild and whirling words with his friends once the ghost is gone, or, on occasion, afterward.⁹ The

⁸ "There's no offence, my lord."—"Yes, by St. Patrick, but there is, Horatio, and much offence, too"; "but this is wondrous strange."—"And therefore as a stranger give it welcome."—"St. Patrick, you know, keeps Purgatory" (*The honest whore*, Part II, I, 1).

⁹ It is perhaps an Anglo-Saxon sort of joke, not appreciated on the Continent, such as abounds in Dickens' dialogue, Thackeray's ballads, and Gilbert

self-assertive swearing and imperious gesture, are they not evidently from the same tongue or hand,¹⁰ though not in the same spirit, as when, in his ultimate moments, he forces the poisoned cup upon the King and then from out of Horatio's grasp,

As thou'rt a man,
Give me the cup. Let go! By Heaven, I'll
have 't!

For, as Fortinbras, who, like the others in the tragedy, knew him to be no spiritual cripple or sluggard, observes in pronouncing the authoritative choric eulogy and commanding regal honors,

he was likely, had he been put on,
To have prov'd most royally.

And in the hero's words to the King about the pearl of poison, there is, though now pointed with hatred, a quibbling retort like that in "make a ghost," thus again merging two situations—

Drink off this potion! Is thy *union* here?
Follow my mother!

Even in "Absent thee from felicity awhile," there is, though now blent with pathos, again a glint of the same humor; and, dying, he is Hamlet still. Instead of a defect, consequently, the outcry, "I'll make a ghost," is a positive virtue and beauty in both the character and the play; and Shakespeare himself might now

and Sullivan's operas, and not unknown in America. "Murder Incorporated" inscribed on an airplane, shot down by the Germans of late, was actually or wilfully misunderstood. This is not to be wondered at. The jokes of criminals are to be taken seriously, as in the case of the American gang that had coined the phrase and adopted the title. But those of the alrmen and the Dickens, Thackeray, and Gilbert characters, of course, are not; and the Victorian authors were much addicted to this form of merriment partly because of the taboo upon the erotic. Certainly, it was not because the English themselves are atrocious. In 1945 in England and Wales there were 152 homicides compared to 7,412 in the United States; and Great Britain nowadays is almost the only big country in which political murder is nearly unknown.

¹⁰ See my *Shakespeare and other masters*, pp. 141 ff., 182-84.

well exclaim, "Unhand me here, Don Salvador!"

Other cases of the critic's word-catching or word-splitting, as in the hero's farewell to the dead Polonius, "I took thee for thy *better*," or in Ophelia's lament after the nunnery scene, "And I of *ladies* most dejected and wretched," are, though less noticeable, equally disturbing. Hamlet's word does not mean that really "his scale of value" is "not one of merit," is only "the Borgian," "of power" (pp. 22-23); and Ophelia's, of course, does not mean "she was not a maiden" (p. 66). Who, not a maiden, ever so went out of her way to avow it? And even the most conscientious and fastidious of poets would scarcely be proof against such inquisition as this.

As for the hero's indecency with Ophelia in both scenes, to which Sr. de Madariaga strenuously objects, part of that is, under Professor J. D. Wilson's influence, quite illusory, and the rest is warranted by an Elizabethan convention. "Get thee to a nunnery" certainly does not here mean "to a brothel" (though "Fishmonger,"¹¹ or "old Jephtha," applied in the preceding scene to Polonius, might mean a "bawd"). If, supposedly, an undermeaning is intended, as with "die" in the sense of "copulate," amazingly—shockingly—attributed of late to Romeo and to Juliet in their final utterances, and to Donne in "Canonization" and "Valediction forbidding mourning," that must needs in some measure appear from the context.¹² Here, in all three repetitions of "nunnery," the context points clearly, on the contrary, to the ordinary honest meaning: "Get thee to a nunnery; *why* wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners?" In a brothel she might well be, and pretty certainly not of saints. Or if her father

really is a bawd, all the more reason, then, for getting her into safe-keeping! "To a nunnery go!"—but not—by Heaven or St. Patrick, either—to a brothel. How strange that a subtle Spaniard and a canny Scotchman in conjunction, both of them unimpeachably respectable, should fail to see this; but the strangest of things have happened in *Hamlet* criticism, and the strangest of all, as we notice below, is when, apparently against the probabilities, most of the critics are right.

Here in the nunnery scene Hamlet is harsh, but, under cover of his distraction, he is only warning her; and the convention of free speaking does not, as in the "Mousetrap" scene, apply. There it does—that of a pure-minded lady listening to and tolerating ribald wit or raillery by a man. Other instances are: Helena with Parolles; Isabella with Lucio; Desdemona with Iago on the quay.¹³ The young ladies do not talk indecently themselves; and some sort of excuse for their complaisance is provided, like Desdemona's "beguiling the thing I am" as she anxiously awaits Othello's arrival on the stormy sea; or may be borne in upon the audience, as when Ophelia humors the supposedly distracted Prince. Partly the dramatist's purpose is to provide momentary comic relief, and, if the lady promptly shut the speaker up, there would be none. Ordinarily, of course, there was something of a "double standard"; and on the stage, in the comparatively free-spoken Elizabethan world, a lady quite proper in both conduct and speech herself, who also effectually discountenanced free speaking in men, would to the audience seem prudish or uninteresting. Partly the purpose is to present a contrast, and not merely between the sexes. It is a contrast somewhat like that, in sentiments and lan-

¹¹ Kittredge, on Act II, scene 2, ll. 174, 190.

¹² Stoll, "Symbolism in Shakespeare," *MLR*, XLII (January, 1947), 16-17, 21.

¹³ Cf. my *From Shakespeare to Joyce* (New York, 1944), p. 247.

guage, between Desdemona and Emilia, where the lady asks her, "Wouldst thou do such a deed for all the world?"¹⁴ or like that (here and there) between Juliet and the Nurse. Partly (again) it may be to make a concession to what Aristotle calls the "weakness of the audience." Often in Continental and even Elizabethan prose romance and *novella*, as well as poetical narrative, both speech and conduct were erotically improper; Shakespeare himself wrote *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* as Marlowe did *Hero and Leander*; but in the reputable popular theater of Elizabethan England, as pretty generally at that time, so far as I know, on the Continent, both hero and heroine, preserving decorum in the matter of caresses or other amorous demonstrations, do not indulge themselves in imagination either; and in England the lovemaking or wooing is by way of wit and merriment or of high poetical rhapsody. Even so the spectators would have it. Most people in company were unwilling (as they still are) to see or hear spoken what they were willing enough to read of in private. Nevertheless, some concessions to the demand for entertainment had to be made; and in public then, as somewhat for that matter still, the erotic in the form of a jest was more acceptable than when wrapped in sentiment.¹⁵

For Sr. de Madariaga, however, this convention would here have no meaning. Ophelia, he thinks, not only is a disobedient and deceitful flirt but either is corrupt or has been corrupted (pp. 42 ff.).

¹⁴ *Othello*, Act IV, scene 3, l. 68.

¹⁵ Cf. *From Shakespeare to Joyce*, chap. ix, "Modesty in the audience." As I also show there, in mirth or embarrassment or else both together, amorous demonstrations on the stage would have been received, as by certain elements in the audience they are today. Even on the Restoration stage they are rather restrained and infrequent; on Shakespeare's the kisses are those "of salutation," as between Cassio and Emilia; and his audience was in this respect somewhat like the Eatanswill crowd that jeered at Mr. Pickwick when he kissed his hand to the distant lady.

Another of Professor Wilson's incredible interpretations and emendations he adopts as he reads for "this too, too solid flesh," in the hero's first soliloquy, "too, too sullied" (pp. 53-54). Only, Mr. Wilson has the man thinking of his mother's incest, which has stained him; Sr. de Madariaga, still more unjustifiably, of "his own secret intimacy with Ophelia." This, certainly, would be a breach in the character's coherence as well as in the critic's own; and I hasten to qualify my remark in his favor above. Why should his Hamlet, so egocentric and cynical, so "full-blooded and foul-mouthed," "whose natural bent in man-and-woman matters is particularly prone to carnal imagination"¹⁶—yes, why in the world should he think his own flesh thus sullied, even if it has been? Only pride, a scorn of such weakness—the very ecstasy of egocentricism—can explain it; and to that, strangely enough, the critic does not have recourse.

Here the convention of propriety in the Elizabethan popular drama, of which the Spaniard is apparently unaware, stands still more conspicuously in his way. That drama was romantic—not, however, in the sense of sexually irregular, as the word applies to the French, Italian, or Spanish romances or *novelle*; and in Shakespeare, as in Greene and Lyly, in Marlowe, Dekker, and Heywood, it was quite impossible that the heroine should have been seduced or that the hero should have desired it. In the popular theater the respect and admiration which Sr. de Madariaga is openly slighting were indispensable; sexual propriety or prudery under Victoria was, we know, not a novelty in Albion; and, though Elizabethan heroines

¹⁶ P. 55. Presently (p. 56) the critic, adopting another of the Wilson readings, has him reproach himself for "a-cursing like a very drab, a stallion," instead of "scullion." Here the context warrants neither the undermeaning nor this Quarto reading. Cf. Kittredge again.

were at times tolerant of free speaking or even somewhat free-spoken themselves, in their conduct (except in the matter of disguising as men or of following men up) they were not free. The above-mentioned dramatists in adapting Italian, Spanish, or French stories, as in *Measure for measure* or *The merchant of Venice*, eliminated or obscured the sexual irregularities in the original. It was only in the esoteric drama, the theater of the court or the inns of court, under the Stuarts, on the pages of the Italianate and Francophile Marston and Chapman, or of the courtiers Beaumont and Fletcher, that the hero and heroine were permitted something of the license of "courtly love," such as Launcelot and Guinevere's.

Now in dealing with *Hamlet*, strange to say, this principle has been duly respected: the critics have, for once, either remembered what Shakespeare in general is like, or else they have followed the tradition of criticism itself or of the stage. Before Sr. de Madariaga, though almost everything under the sun had been said of *Hamlet*, no important critic, so far as I am aware, had entertained even the suspicion of seduction, though two German men of letters, Tieck and Börne, had. And, stranger still, these Germans, unlike most of the other critics in their vagaries, had what is for us prying, ferreting readers of today considerable evidence in the text to support them.

Early in the action both her brother and her father warn her, and not so much against losing her heart to him as her virtue. He, in turn, playing mad, warns the wiseacre himself not to let her walk in the sun, in allusion to its traditional impregnating power; asks her whether she is "honest" (or virtuous), then bids her get her to a nunnery, avowing that he loved her once, but only to disavow it; and jests intimately and indecently with her at the theatrical performance. She, heartbroken after her father's death, and mad in reality, sings songs

about true loves, Saint Valentine's Day, and opening the chamber door. Little is lacking but the hero's remorse, yet for the psychologists that would be a trifle; and if, just as it is (inconceivable!), the play were in French or German . . . Ophelia would be another Gretchen. Goethe, though imitating Ophelia, was writing in the spirit of his time and country, which were Tieck's and Börne's; and what saves Ophelia for us from that is mainly the stage tradition. . . . On the boards, in the spirit of early criticism and despite that of the later, *Hamlet* is to us, as to our play-going fathers and grandfathers, a romantic, not a realistic, hero, and Ophelia a delicately romantic heroine; both, moreover, not of the courtly order, like Launcelot and Guinevere, Tristram and Isolt, but of the Elizabethan, like Romeo and Juliet, Orlando and Rosalind, the lovers in Greene and Lyly.¹⁷

The attitude of the orthodox critics, on the other hand, is surely one of the most remarkable, and also creditable, phenomena in criticism—the intention of the author at this point duly perceived and acknowledged through the changes of the centuries. Here, for once in a way, there has been sensitiveness, with responsiveness (not acuteness, with ingenuity); the reader or spectator "giving up the reins of his imagination," as Tristram Shandy would have him do, "into his author's hands" (Book III, chap. xii). As I have said before,¹⁸ Ophelia's ditties are not her own but are snatches of folksong, familiar to her as to the audience; her memory is the faithful but irresponsible sort of the crazy; and the only sexual significance here is in her thoughts running upon young men, with one of whom she has, manifestly, been in love. The other apparent indications of a seduction but serve the purposes of the main story: the warnings of father and brother lead to her repulsing Hamlet, thereby lending him a pretext for playing mad for love of her,

¹⁷ From *Shakespeare to Joyce*, pp. 150-51.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

which he then in succeeding scenes continues to do. And to this the critics, fortunately, could still respond, despite the prevailing absorption of critics and authors alike in the action as proceeding from and reflecting the character! It is a continuation of circumstances, however; and the requirement of critics and audience alike—that hero and heroine should command both admiration and respect—conspired with an instinctive perception of Shakespeare in general and also of Ophelia in particular. Grillparzer, the poet and dramatist, shares it as he thus makes answer to Tieck, with the privilege of a fellow-Teuton: “Wer in Ophelia die Unschuld nicht erkennt, der hat noch wenig Unschuld gesehen!”¹⁹ (Cervantes would have been more delicate, less direct.)

It is a relief that to the hero the present critic does not apply the now shop-worn “Oedipus complex” (p. 74)—but it is for the moment only, and his reason is that Hamlet is too self-centered to love his mother “even in the carnal way.” Why, what a *Prince* is this! Horatio now might well exclaim, or even Dr. Ernest Jones.²⁰ The hero is charged with egocentrism not only in killing the king but also in his own dying: “When he might have thought of Ophelia, or of Polonius—both his victims—or of his father, at last avenged, or of his mother, poisoned, of whom, of what does he think? Of himself and of his cause.” To the sentiment of those immortal words Don Salvador is as impervious as Mr. J. C. Ransom is (partly at least) to the style.²¹

The same charge of egocentrism, in

¹⁹ *Werke*, XIV, 216.

²⁰ This may, however, be only a variation upon his theory: that the Prince is the rival of his father and spares his uncle as “his buried self.” In *Who's who* Dr. Jones is listed as president of the Psycho-analytical Society; and his “recreation,” as “figure-skating.”

²¹ Cf. *World's body* (New York, 1938), pp. 93–94: the line “Absent thee” called “odd, faintly facetious, Latinistic, foppish, and amazing.”

their last moments, might equally well be brought against Brutus, “the noblest Roman of them all,” and against Antony, by no means so noble but still on the whole an extravert, as it has been against Othello,²² once called “noble” by Iago, in soliloquy and not in mockery, as well as five times by others. So then it ought to be against Antigone, who in succumbing to her fate, thinks not of Haemon, her betrothed, whom she is leaving; or against Euripides’ Hippolytus, who would have his father pray to be given other sons like the hero himself.²³ In fact, we must remember the element of self-description in both ancient and Elizabethan tragedy, which, as the hero or heroine in self-defense bids farewell, is like that in the Greek epitaphs couched in the first person, the dead remembering their own good points.²⁴ “All art,” as Mr. C. S. Lewis has lately said, “is made to face the audience”; or as I had remarked, less pregnantly, “Painters, like stage-managers, turn, however animated the group, the faces of nearly all the figures towards us.” It is a matter of the *optique du théâtre*, as Dumas *fils* called it, whereby, to the audience, the hero must seem to be a hero, the villain a villain, the hypocrite a hypocrite, the demagogue a demagogue, as off the stage they would not—not even the hero himself—dare to do. “To a spectator,” as I have elsewhere said, “subterfuges must look like subterfuges, pretexts like pretexts”; but Sr. de Madariaga, forgetting the stage, insists that “for the man who wants to procrastinate cogent arguments [like Hamlet’s reason for sparing the King at prayer] are more valuable than mere pretexts” (p. 98). He forgets

²² The opinion of several recent critics that in his great penultimate speech he is cheering himself up, sentimentalizing.

²³ L. 1453.

²⁴ See J. W. Mackail, *Select epigrams from the Greek anthology* (London, 1911), chap. iii, “Epitaphs.”

the stage to the point, indeed, of saying "what makes the play so haunting is that it really does not happen on the stage but [egocentricism again!] within Hamlet's soul" (p. 92). Even today the dramatist, as Mr. Kenneth Burke notices, has regard for the psychology of the audience as well as that of the speaker.²⁵ And at the end in Elizabethan tragedy the hero generally, with blood on his hands or his head, has necessarily to speak up in defense of himself, as both Hamlet and Othello do. Hamlet, of course, is in particular need of it:

O good Horatio! what a wounded name,
Things standing thus unknown, shall live behind me!

What is on his mind, to be sure, and on Horatio's as well as Shakespeare's own, is not (as this critic, like most others, has thought) what Hamlet has not done but what he has done or might well be suspected of having done. The killing now of the king, even of the queen and of Laertes, demands explaining, as well as that of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, of Polonius, and (in another sense) of his own father before that. Evidently he *does* think of his father, at last avenged, and of his mother poisoned; but only Horatio can "tell my story," "report me and my cause aright," as in lines 391-97 he then summarily does. Explicitly, of course, he cannot on the stage; for, at this point in the artistic development of both the dramatist and his audience, there could not be, now that the action is over, a recapitulation of it, after the fashion of Friar Laurence, in an early play.

To Sr. de Madariaga, apparently, the Prince's reputation seems of little mo-

ment; for nowadays, in our cynical—our egocentric!—idealism, we are inclined to belittle name and fame. Not so either the Elizabethans or the ancients; nor, for that matter, the Spaniards, if not now, at least in the time of Lope and Calderón.²⁶ In the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, as in the medieval and Renaissance epics and romances, honor and renown are now and then on nearly every tongue.²⁷ Achilles chooses glory instead of long life; and Hector, as, later, he turns and faces him, has a hope beyond hope of doing "some great deed of arms whereof men yet unborn shall hear." So it is also with the lyric poets; yet for himself Pindar, the Theban eagle, would humbly, like Hamlet, but "leave a name that hath no ill repute" (*Nem.* viii). The heroes of Sophocles, all noble, as Dr. Bowra says, "count their reputation before everything else." And in Shakespeare it is who but Iago that professes an idealism so egocentric and inverted as this: "You have lost no reputation at all," quoth he to Cassio, "unless you repute yourself such a loser." About to die, Brutus—even Antony—in his reputation rejoices, while Othello is bent upon clearing his own. Now it is only for this—not praise or fame—that Hamlet is asking; yet this, even today and in life itself as we insist on what we are rather than on what men may say or think we are, is no trivial

²⁵ "Heroic or saintly life," says of late who but the great Unamuno, "has always followed in the wake of glory, temporal or eternal, earthly or celestial. Believe not those who tell you they seek to do good for its own sake, without hope of reward, etc."

²⁶ Cf. C. M. Bowra, *From Virgil to Milton* (London, 1945), pp. 9, 13: in Homer and the other oral epics "what counts is not morality but honour, the uttermost in valour and endurance." In Malory, over and over again, it is "worship." In Shakespeare generally, as Frank Harris says, "his heroes have no other motive for brave deeds than love of honour, no other fear than that of shame with which to overcome the fear of death." One of the strangest of all critical maneuvers is that whereby Falstaff is exonerated and exalted at the expense of Hotspur and the Prince. Cf. my *Shakespeare studies*, pp. 25, 472-75, 479-80; *Shakespeare Jahrbuch*, LXXIV (1938), 59-60.

²⁷ Preface to "Paradise lost" (London, 1942), p. 19; *My Poets and playwrights* (1930), p. 29; Burke, *Counter-statement* (New York, 1931), pp. 42-43. As for the demagogue and the principle of the character playing the part instead of quite living it cf. T. S. Eliot, *Sacred wood* (London, 1920), p. 75, who (after Dumas) has anticipated us all.

or negligible matter. As most people will acknowledge, unduly to disregard what others say or think of us is, if anything, more egocentric—more “introverted,” “antisocial”—than unduly to regard it. The vast majority of men, good as well as bad, are to reputation not indifferent; and all good or sensible men are still anxious to preserve their honor. What, moreover, in the last analysis and, originally, in the classical and the modern languages alike, is honor or glory but renown or fame, but reputation, good name? In Rome the temples of valor and honor—*virtus* and *honor*—were adjoining. In “Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory”—*ἡ δόξα καὶ ἡ δύναμις καὶ ἡ δόξα*—of the Lord’s Prayer, *δόξα* is, primarily, “good repute”; and what is attributable to the Deity ought as an aspiration to be creditable in a mortal. In the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and (for that matter) in common parlance still, a woman’s virtue is her “good name”; and first among the knightly lover’s virtues was secrecy. The words “honor” and “glory” have, in some languages, been sublimated as the other words have not, the one in the sense of personal virtue, the other in that of military or else of religious exaltation or splendor; but their primary meaning should not be forgotten, and the quite unquestionable “ladies” of Corneille and Racine, speaking of “ma gloire,” mean their “good name,” their virtue.

What by his name, so “wounded,” Hamlet means is his honor; and to that he cannot be indifferent—how strange that by a Castilian cavalier he should be expected to be!—and not only because of the complicated mystery of his situation but also because of the self-description in Renaissance dramatic art as well as the indispensable “admiration and respect.” Now, if he means only honor, he is here not egocentric but normal and noble; for even off the stage it is almost as important

to a good man not to seem to do wrong as not to do it. If, on the other hand, he means merely a concern for what people think of him, he is not noble, yet not necessarily egocentric either; for as such he should rather fall back upon his own high self-esteem. Or, if he should be thought anxious for people to think well of him posthumously, tickling his own vanity by the prospect, still, again, he is not thoroughly egocentric, though certainly not tragic at all.

“A good critic,” as a great recent poet has said, “is rarer than a good poet,” and particularly rare among those who deal with a literature not their own. How the French still overrate Byron and Poe and have failed fully to appreciate Shakespeare, Milton, and Wordsworth! They do not perfectly respond to English poetic diction, rhyme, and rhythm, even as Englishmen do not to the French. But the fundamental trouble with the illustrious Sr. de Madariaga, as it seems to me, is, apart from his caviling and captiousness and his discovering and reading of riddles, that, like many others, he treats the figure of Hamlet as if it were, instead of a fiction, a document or faithful record—instead of a portrait, a photograph. This conception Maurice Morgann in the eighteenth century frankly avowed and acted upon it. The Spaniard in his Introduction has disavowed it, yet has also acted upon it. Like Morgann and his numerous followers, he has thus been really disregarding the dramatist who imagined the figure, painted the portrait. As we saw above, he does not allow for the *optique du théâtre* and thinks a cogent reason more suspect than an apparent pretext. He has imagined notions and motives in the hero of which there is little or no evidence in the text:

What Hamlet feels is the defeat he had undergone when . . . he let Claudius take the

throne. Why did he? This question he cannot answer. He puts it to himself throughout the play . . . under the guise of asking why he does not avenge his father. . . . That is the true meaning of "To be or not to be," as he himself explains in the five lines that follow [p. 104].

Read them again and see for yourself. "In these soliloquies," he continues, what he is ever turning in his mind is his incapacity to do great things, to be great, to be. That is the question he cannot answer.

We can. Hamlet cannot force himself into action because he was too egocentric for that. All action—even crime—requires freedom from egotism [p. 105].

And is it thus that "the play becomes as clear as the solar system after Copernicus" (p. 13)?²⁸ According to the history or criminology that I have read, the opposite is the case. The conquerors Caesar, Napoleon, Frederick the Great; the political leaders Hitler, Mussolini, as well as some nearer home who might be mentioned; the mere criminals in Lombroso—all were egotists. The criminals Shakespeare himself, apart from the mere device of self-description, makes so. Of the public executions in times past, Shaw, in "Killing for sport," observes that "the criminal had what all criminals love: a large audience." Loeb and Leopold, the young Chicago pair of murderers, aspired to commit "the perfect crime" and rejoiced together, in unholy fashion, over the feat. Vanity now and then seems to be even a prominent motive; as when, not long since in a middle-western city, a man convicted of using the mails to defraud had built a tower of business offices, with his name in enormous letters legible for miles, sculptured on the top. Often, too, criminals are excessively dressy and glaringly vain of their

personal appearance.²⁹ Only the other day a young man was reported in the newspaper as confessing to a brutal murder on condition that his picture should be put on the front page. And what of coherence now? "Nothing is gained by demonstrations that the Prince is an egocentric Borgia," says the *London times* reviewer. "The Borgias were not remarkable for procrastination."

Not only does the critic find in the play what most candid spirits must confess they cannot find; he also discovers what is rather foreign to the dramatist's way of thinking or that of his time. Shakespeare, as Bradley and some of the less insistently philosophical Germans of late have observed, had, if any, very elementary notions of racial or social psychology; and he would, then, have been somewhat at sea before the conception of "society bent on moulding Hamlet to its image and expectations" (p. 9). "Tradition," that is to say, prompts him to revenge. If this is all that does, no wonder he is so tardy; but it is a notion that would have meant as little to Shakespeare and his audience as (I think) to Lope or Calderón and theirs. That, however, is, it would seem, immaterial to Sr. de Madariaga, treating the play as a document, a record.

The most curious thing in the Spaniard's criticism, however, is his ignoring that of his compatriot, Mr. Santayana: "The simple truth is, that the play pre-exists and [in the matter of secrecy, delay, the pretense of madness] imposes itself here on the poet, who is reduced to paving the way as best he can for the foregone complications."

Had Hamlet forthwith communicated his mission to his friends, and rushed with them to the banquet hall where the king was at the moment carousing, had he instantly despatched the usurper and proclaimed himself

²⁸ This, too, is in Mr. Wilson's vein: "Restoration along these lines, I believe, makes the plot of *Hamlet* work properly for the first time since Shakespeare's day" (*Hamlet*, p. lx). Is it not criticism, above all, that requires the "freedom"?

²⁹ Cf. my *Shakespeare studies*, pp. 357-58.

king in his stead, there would have been no occasion for four more acts and for so much heart-searching soliloquy. The given plot is the starting-point, and its irrationality at this juncture, by which the comic effects of a feigned madness were secured for the playwright, must be accepted as a fundamental datum on which incidents and characters are alike built up.³⁰

When the philosopher and poet says this, it does not seem so trivial as the remark of the earliest Shakespeare critic, supposedly Sir Thomas Hamner, does to Mr. Wilson and others, though to the same effect: "Had Hamlet gone naturally to work there would have been an end of our play" (*Some remarks on the tragedy of Hamlet* [1736]). "The poet, therefore, was obliged to delay the hero's revenge." Not merely, however, because he was re-writing the lines. As in all good stories of revenge, ancient as well as modern, the capital deed must come near the end; and at the very end, obviously, when, as here, the death of the revenger himself is involved. So (though not in the legend) it undoubtedly was in Kyd's *Hamlet*, as in the German version and his later sister-play, *The Spanish tragedy*, a variation upon the Danish, revenge for a son instead of a father; and that climax, in a quadruple ironical denouement, Shakespeare or his audience, either, familiar with the older play and fond of it, was not of the sort to surrender. Melville's *Moby Dick* is a significant parallel—a story of pursuit but also of revenge (as Hamlet is of revenge and inquiry, intrigue and counter-

intrigue) in which likewise the revenger at almost the same moment perishes. As Mr. Belgion has recently said, "Every tale of pursuit must be a tale in which the main action is perpetually delayed."³¹ Now in devising the intervening action Melville is, of course, not nearly so successful as Shakespeare and Kyd. In too many chapters the enterprise is nearly or quite forgotten, whereas in the course of the tragedy it never is; and by the reproaches and exhortations, as in revenge tragedy even from the time of Aeschylus, the audience is reminded, kept expectant and excited. By the secrecy, moreover, the hero is ennobled—both the inquiry and the deed are not to be shared; by the feigned madness he is given a convenient cover for his inquiry and activity, and Claudius, in turn, a cover, but also (which is still more important) a provocation, for his own; and then, the Ghost justified and the king detected, the initiative, by a happy dramatic inspiration as in no previous revenge tragedy, is, both readily and naturally, taken over by the villain, and the hero, thus relieved of the ignominious burden of treacherous homicidal contriving and beguiling, but himself no cripple or sluggard, is left free simply to checkmate or circumvent it and, in the end, turn it suddenly and sharply round.

But it is criticism, I recollect, that I am here supposed to be criticizing, not the tragedy itself.

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³¹ Introduction to an edition of *Moby Dick* (1946). There is further discussion of the matter in my article, "Symbolism in *Moby Dick*," to appear in the *Journal of the history of ideas*.

³⁰ II (Triton ed.; New York, 1937), 212; cf. also *Shakespeare and other masters*, pp. 125-26.

JOHNSON'S "DISSERTATION ON FLYING" AND JOHN
WILKINS' *MATHEMATICAL MAGICK*

GWIN J. KOLB

THOUGH the "Dissertation on the art of flying" has always been one of the best-known chapters in *Rasselas*,¹ an analysis of its structure in relation to certain sections of John Wilkins' *Mathematical magick* (1648)² throws some new light on Johnson's probable method of constructing the larger part of the chapter.

Earlier in the work, it will be recalled, *Rasselas*, fired by the hope of leaving the "happy valley," has concluded his search for an opening through which to escape. For the narrative to proceed, however, he must be led to engage in another attempt at flight, and, since he has exhausted his own resources, another agent must obviously be introduced to provide the means of the second attempt. The agent Johnson selects is the "artist" who, in chapter vi, proposes to the prince the possibility of building a contrivance for flying. But if *Rasselas*, discouraged and rather skeptical as a result of his failure, is to take the artist's scheme seriously, then the latter must be represented as an unusually skilful "mechanist." And so Johnson not only states that the artist is a man famous for "his knowledge of the mechanick powers" but also lists specific examples of his mechanical ability. Furthermore, when *Rasselas* visits him, the workman is engaged in building a novel vehicle of locomotion—a "sailing chariot"—which further demonstrates his ingenuity as a craftsman.

When the prince urges the completion of the chariot, the artist, desirous of "higher honours," broaches the notion of the "swifter migration of wings." *Rasselas*, although interested in the suggestion and impressed by what the artist has "already performed," is nevertheless doubtful, and he therefore proposes a series of objections, to each of which the artist makes a reply. Arranged in a logical sequence, these objections include (1) a general argument based on the belief that the earth is the proper element of man, (2) the fact that the limitation of human limbs prevents a flight of any consequence, and (3) the difficulty of respiration in the upper regions. Though prompt and glib, the artist's answers are not always pertinent: in response to the first he offers the analogy of swimming; against the second he urges the gradual suspension of the law of gravity; as to the third he remarks only that "nothing . . . will ever be attempted, if all possible objections must be first overcome."

After this series of objections and answers, the artist declares his intention of beginning the "wings" immediately, and he secures from *Rasselas* a promise not to divulge the "art" to anyone. During the process of construction the prince observes the work from time to time. Then, when the wings are finished, the artist makes his leap and, dropping into the lake, is pulled to land by the prince. Thus ends *Rasselas*' second scheme for escaping from the "happy valley."

From Johnson's "Dissertation" one may turn to another quite different work, certain parts of which become unusually

¹ Ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford, 1927). Cited hereafter as "Chapman."

² Published at London. All quotations in this paper refer to the text of the work published as a part of Wilkins' *Mathematical and philosophical works* (London, 1708).

interesting when examined in relation to chapter vi in *Rasselas*. John Wilkins' *Mathematical magick: or the wonders that may be perform'd by mechanical geometry*, although not among the most popular sources of quotations, is still quoted frequently enough in the first edition of the *Dictionary* to indicate clearly Johnson's familiarity with it. It supplies, for example, illustrative passages for the meanings of at least two of the words ("contrivances" and "volant") in the "Dissertation."³ The work is divided into two "books": (1) "Archimedes, or, mechanical powers," consisting of twenty chapters on such "mechanick faculties" as the balance, "leaver," wheel, etc.; and (2) "Dædalus: or, mechanical motions," containing fifteen chapters treating of the "divers kinds of Automata," the art of flying, perpetual motion, etc. Of these fifteen chapters, only the first eight need be considered here, and only five—i, ii, vi, vii, viii—treated in any detail.

In chapter i of "Dædalus," entitled "The divers kinds of automata, or self-movers," etc.,⁴ Wilkins first distinguishes the various "automata" into two kinds: (1) "Those that are moved by something which is extrinsical unto their own Frame; as Mills, by Water or Wind," and (2) "Those that receive their Motion from something" belonging "to the Frame it self; as Clocks, Watches," etc.⁵ Selecting "mills" as the more common examples of the first class of "self-movers," he considers, initially, "Water-Mills" and, second, "wind-mills," which, if often "more

³ See n. 8 below. An examination of approximately every other letter in the first edition of the *Dictionary* reveals at least 105 quotations from *Mathematical magick*, including passages from all five chapters discussed in this paper.

⁴ The complete title of the chapter is "The divers kinds of automata, or self-movers. Of mills, and the contrivance of several motions by rarify'd air. A brief digression concerning wind-guns."

⁵ P. 86. References to *Mathematical magick* cited hereafter as "Dædalus."

convenient" than the former, are to the same purpose. After indicating several of their rarer uses, he turns, finally, to a "digression concerning wind-guns," which concludes the chapter.

Chapter ii, labeled "Of a sailing chariot,"⁶ records earlier instances of the use of "sailing chariots," includes sketches of two chariots, and contains Wilkins' treatment of the chief difficulty hindering the unlimited use of such a vehicle.

The next three chapters in "Dædalus" are concerned, respectively, with "Fixed automata," "Moveable and gradient automata," and an "Ark for submarine navigations."⁷ With chapter vi (entitled "Of the volant automata," etc.), however, Wilkins begins a three-chapter sequence dealing with various aspects of the art of flying. In this chapter he defines "volant Automata,"⁸ presents previous opinions concerning this kind of "self-movers," and offers hints for the construction of the wings of the contrivances. Then, after advancing the notion that "it is possible also for a Man to fly himself," he mentions several of the difficulties obstructing aerial experiments.

Chapters vii and viii are entitled "Concerning the art of flying" and "A resolution of the two chief difficulties that seem to oppose the possibility of a flying chariot."

⁶ The complete title is "Of a sailing chariot, that may without horses be driven on the land by the wind, as ships are on the sea."

⁷ The full titles of these chapters are: (1) "Concerning the fixed automata, clocks, spheres, representing the heavenly motions: The several excellencies that are most commendable in such kind of contrivances"; (2) "Of the moveable and gradient automata, representing the motions of living creatures, various sounds, of birds, or beasts, and some of them articulate"; (3) "Concerning the possibility of framing an ark for submarine navigations. The difficulties and conveniences of such a contrivance."

⁸ This definition, which Johnson quotes—with the omission of a few words—in the *Dictionary* as illustrating one of the meanings of "volant," is: "The volant, or flying Automata, are such Mechanical Contrivances as have a Self-motion, whereby they are carried aloft in the open Air like the flight of Birds" ("Dædalus," p. 112).

ot" and consist of an account of the "several ways whereby" flying "hath been, or may be attempted." These ways include flying (1) "By Spirits, or Angels," (2) "By the help of Fowls," (3) "By Wings fastned immediately to the Body," and (4) "By a Flying Chariot."⁹ Chapter vii contains Wilkins' discussion of each of them, flight by wings receiving most of his attention.

The "resolution," in chapter viii, of the primary difficulties opposing the possibility of a flying chariot involves, according to Wilkins, answering these "two *Quæries*": (1) "Whether an Engine of such Capacity and Weight, may be supported by so thin and light a Body as the Air?" and (2) "Whether the Strength of the Persons within it, may be sufficient for the Motion of it?"¹⁰ The greater part of the chapter consists, therefore, of his examination of these two (and additional) questions. Later he considers the various probable uses and conveniences of a flying chariot, among them the fact that it could transport a man anywhere in the world. In the last paragraphs of the chapter, Wilkins returns to a discussion of some of the "particulars" which require attention "for the perfecting of such a flying Chariot."¹¹

Certain obvious similarities between the "Dissertation" and parts of "Dædalus" will have become clear from this account of the earlier work. With one exception, however, no one, apparently, has noted these resemblances.¹² In his "Johnson on ballooning and flight,"¹³ H. E. Hodgson remarks that Johnson "probably borrowed from Wilkins' earlier *Dissertation concerning the Art of Flying* (1648)"

the notion "of the decreasing power of the earth's attraction at great heights" (p. 65). But, clearly, the similarities between Johnson and Wilkins are more numerous than Hodgson indicates; and thus a detailed examination of the narrative in the "Dissertation"—viewed in the light of certain sections of "Dædalus"—will, it is suggested, amount to at least a plausible, if admittedly partial, reconstruction of the way in which Johnson built chapter vi in *Rasselas*.

At the beginning of the chapter, Johnson, who has presumably already decided upon the general "flying" scheme of *Rasselas*' second attempt to escape from the "happy valley" (a hint for which may or may not have come from Wilkins), sets out—as mentioned above—to make the mechanical skill of the would-be flier convincing enough for the discouraged, but still determined, prince to take an active interest in the artist's plan for flight. And the results of his effort seem to be due, in part at least, to the discriminating use of material included in chapters i and ii of "Dædalus." Discussing the activities of the workman "who had contrived," for the inhabitants of the "happy valley," "many engines both of use and recreation," Johnson lists these specific inventions:

By a wheel, which the stream turned, he forced the water into a tower, whence it was distributed to all the apartments of the palace. He erected a pavillion in the garden, around which he kept the air always cool by artificial showers. One of the groves . . . was ventilated by fans, to which the rivulet that run through it gave a constant motion; and instruments of soft musick were placed at proper distances, of which some played by the impulse of the wind, and some by the power of the stream.¹⁴

Finally, as an even stronger proof of the artist's ingenuity, he represents him as

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 116. ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 122. ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

¹² Miss Marjorie Nicolson's recent *Voyages to the moon* (New York, 1948) treats both the "Dissertation" and Wilkins' numerous observations on flying, but makes no attempt to connect them (pp. 93-98, 113-16, 133-34, *passim*).

¹³ *London mercury*, X (1924), 63-72.

¹⁴ Chapman, p. 27.

engaged in building a "sailing chariot," an unusual vehicle, at the moment of Rasselas' visit. And the prince, upon examination, perceives the contrivance to be "practicable" at least "upon a level surface."¹⁵

In chapter i of "Dædalus," Wilkins, referring to the various services performed by water-mills, remarks: "Herein doth the Skill of an Artificer chiefly consist, in the Application of these common Motions unto various and beneficial Ends; making them serviceable, not only for the Grinding of Corn, but for the . . . elevating of Water, or the like."¹⁶ He makes no mention of the "artificial showers" produced by Johnson's clever artist, but in the succeeding account of wind-mills (cf. Johnson's "ventilated by fans") he describes a "Musical Instrument invented by Cornelius Dreble; which being set in the Sunshine, would of it self render a soft and pleasant Harmony; but being removed into the Shade, would presently become silent."¹⁷ Again, somewhat later, when considering the several uses of circular "sails" to be placed in the chimney and turned by the motion of the ascending air, he suggests the possibility of using them "for the Chiming of Bells, or other musical Devices; and there cannot be any more pleasant Contrivance for continual and cheap Musick."¹⁸ Afterward comes the "digression concerning Wind-Guns."

Next, Wilkins turns to a discussion, in chapter ii, of a "sailing chariot," which

can be driven by sails on land. He proposes as the "chief doubt" of the practicability of such a contrivance the question of whether "every little Ruggedness or Unevenness of the Ground, will not cause such a jolting of the Chariot, as to hinder the Motion of its Sails."¹⁹ But this problem, Wilkins believes, is "capable of several Remedies," and he closes the chapter by wondering "why none of our Gentry who live near great Plains, and smooth Champions, have attempted any thing to this Purpose."²⁰ Then follow the three chapters on other kinds of "automata."

Granted, then, that the similarity between the first two paragraphs of the "Dissertation" and the first two chapters in "Dædalus" may be more than mere coincidence, one may speculate briefly about some of the reasons for Johnson's inclusion or omission of material in Wilkins. In the first place, he would not want to use all the notions found in (say) the first five chapters of "Dædalus" simply because he is to be primarily concerned with the attempt at flight in the "Dissertation" and, consequently, needs only to present the artist as a very clever contriver of "engines." Moreover, in the choice of suggestions he would, one may suppose, be guided by the principle of what would be suitable to the general character of the "happy valley." For instance, to mention "wind-guns" as one of the workman's contrivances would be clearly inappropriate to the peacefulness of the valley. Again, since the inmates already possess all the ordinary comforts of life, certain of the remaining notions in Wilkins seem more apropos than others for Johnson's particular purpose; e.g., to conceive of the artist as constructing elaborate musical instruments is a more ap-

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 28. In her *Voyages to the moon* (p. 133) Miss Nicolson states that Rasselas found the mechanic "engaged in building a flying machine." She adds: "Although the term used by Johnson is 'sailing chariot,' this invention, too, belongs, as later description shows, to the history of artificial wings." The context of the chapter, however, makes it clear that the "sailing chariot" being built by the artist is not a flying machine but a vehicle designed for traveling only on land.

¹⁶ "Dædalus," pp. 86-87. Italics mine.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 95. Johnson quotes this passage in the *Dictionary* under "to jolt."

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

propriate example of his ingenuity than to picture him building a spit turned by "sails" for the roasting of meat. In some such way, it seems reasonable to assume, Johnson proceeded until he had actually composed the beginning of the "Dissertation."

Next, the artist, flattered by the prince's remarks concerning the sailing chariot and wishing "to gain yet higher honours," advances the idea of flying. And Rasselas, interested but conscious of his own failure to discover a means of escape from the valley, quite logically "enquire[s] further" before he allows his "hope to afflict him by disappointment."²¹ He objects, therefore, that "every animal has his element assigned him; the birds have the air, and man and beasts the earth." "So, replied the mechanist, fishes have the water, in which yet beasts can swim by nature, and men by art. He that can swim needs not despair to fly: to swim is to fly in a grosser fluid, and to fly is to swim in a subtler." By proportioning the "power of resistance to the different density of the matter through which we are to pass," he declares, a man "will be necessarily upborn by the air," provided that he "can renew any impulse upon it, faster than the air can recede from the pressure."²²

"But," returns the prince, passing to his second objection, "the exercise of swimming . . . is very laborious; the strongest limbs are soon wearied; I am afraid the act of flying will be yet more violent, and wings will be of no great use, unless we can fly further than we can swim."²³ In reply the artist admits that "the labour of rising from the ground . . . will be great, as we see it in the heavier domestick fowls; but," he asserts,

as we mount higher, the earth's attraction, and the body's gravity, will be gradually diminished, till we shall arrive at a region where the man will float in the air without any tendency to fall: no care will then be necessary, but to move forwards, which the gentlest impulse will effect.²⁴

Turning again to "Dædalus," one finds, in chapter vi (on "volant automata"), after the suggestion that man can fly himself, a paragraph dealing with the various impediments to aerial experiments. Eusebius expressed one of these, says Wilkins, when he spoke of the "necessity" with which

*every thing is confined by the Laws of Nature, and the Decrees of Providence, so that nothing can go out of that way unto which naturally it is designed; as a Fish cannot reside on the Land, nor a Man in the Water, or aloft in the Air; [he] infers, that therefore none will venture upon any such vain Attempt, as passing in the Air, . . . unless his Brain be a little crazed with the Humour of Melancholy; whereupon he advises, that we should not in any Particular, endeavour to transgress the Bounds of Nature, . . . and since we are destitute of Wings, not to imitate the Flight of Birds.*²⁵

Later, in his answer (chap. viii) to the question of whether a heavy chariot can be supported by "so thin and light a Body as the Air," he remarks, "It is this [difficulty] must add a Glory to the Invention," and declares that just as a "Kite" is able to "swim up and down" in the air at will, so men, by long practice, will be able to do likewise in a flying chariot. Furthermore, Wilkins argues, in terms similar to those of the artist:

As it is in those Bodies which are carried on the Water, tho' they be never so big or so ponderous, . . . yet they will always swim on the Top, if they be but any thing lighter than so much Water as is equal to them in Bigness; So likewise is it in the Bodies that are carried in

²¹ Chapman, p. 28.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 29.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30.

²⁵ "Dædalus," p. 115. Italics mine.

the Air. It is not their Greatness . . . that can hinder their being supported in that light Element, if we suppose them to be extended unto a proportionable Space of Air.²⁶

Earlier, also, in chapter vii, in the discussion of the problems involved in flying by wings, he admits that, because of the inevitable weariness resulting from the extended motions of a man's arms, human flight would be "but short and slow, answerable . . . to the *Flight of such Domestic Fowl as are most conversant on the Ground*. . . ."²⁷ His solution to the problem is the conjecture that the legs, instead of the arms, might be used to effect the motion of the wings; "by which means a Man should (as it were) walk or climb up into the Air. . . ."²⁸ Again, in his treatment of the second "chief doubt" about flying, in chapter viii—that of whether the passengers' strength will be sufficient to move the chariot—he states that "the main Difficulty and Labour of it will be in the raising of it from the Ground; near unto which, the Earths attractive Vigor is of greatest Efficacy. . . . When once it is aloft in the Air, the Motion of it will be

easie. . . ."²⁹ And on the same page he asserts that, though the motion of the chariot "may be difficult at the first," yet it will "still be easier" as the flying machine "ascends higher, till at length it shall become utterly devoid of Gravity, when the least Strength will be able to bestow upon it a swift Motion"—as, he notes, he has "proved more at large in another Discourse."³⁰

In the "Dissertation" the artist, after explaining his conception of the law of gravity to Rasselas, imagines the "pleasure" with which "a philosopher, furnished with wings, and hovering in the sky, would see the earth, and all it's inhabitants, rolling beneath him, and presenting to him successively, by it's diurnal motion, all the countries within the same parallel."³¹ While acknowledging the benefits of flying, the prince, eager but still skeptical, voices his third objection. "I am afraid," he says, "that no man will be able to breathe in these regions of speculation and tranquility," and he cites the difficulty of respiration "upon lofty mountains."³² The artist, brushing aside this doubt, declares that, with Rasselas' approval, he will "try the first flight" himself, and adds: "I have considered the structure of all volant animals, and find the folding continuity of the bat's wings most easily accommodated to the human form. Upon this model I shall begin my task to morrow. . . ."³³

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 125-26.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 121. Italics mine. In chap. xiv of *The discovery of a new world* (given, incidentally, as a reference in chap. viii of "Dædalus"), a work included, like *Mathematical magick*, in the 1708 ed. of Wilkins' *Mathematical and philosophical works*, is a passage closer to Rasselas' second objection and the "domestick fowl" remark of the artist. Discussing the possibility of flying to the moon, Wilkins says: "'Tis usually observed, that amongst the variety of Birds, those which do most converse upon the Earth, and are swiftest in their running, . . . together with all Domestical Fowl, are less able for flight than others which are for the most part upon the Wing. . . . And therefore we may well think, that Man being not naturally endowed with any such Condition as may enable him for this Motion; and being necessarily tied to a more especial Residence on the Earth, must needs be slower than any Fowl, or less able to hold out. Thus it is also in Swimming; which Art though it be grown to a good eminence, yet he that is best skilled in it, is not able either for continuance, or swiftness to equal a Fish; because he is not naturally appointed to it. So that though a Man could fly, yet he would be so slow in it, and so quickly weary, that he could never think to reach so great a Journey as it is to the Moon" (p. 116).

²⁸ "Dædalus," p. 121.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 126. The "discourse" is *The discovery of a new world* (see n. 27 above); the passage referred to reads, in part: "If a Man were above the Sphere of this Magnetical Virtue which proceeds from the Earth, he might there stand as firmly in the open Air, as he can now upon the Ground: And not only so, but he may also move with a far greater Swiftness, than any living Creatures here below; because then he is without all Gravity, being not attracted any way; and so consequently will not be liable to such Impediments as may in the least manner resist that kind of Motion which he shall apply himself unto" (p. 122).

³¹ Chapman, p. 30.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

As indicated in the earlier general description of "Dædalus," Wilkins, like Johnson's artist, also considers the various possible uses of a flying contrivance. Among these is the fact that "it would be serviceable . . . for the Conveyance of a Man to any remote Place of this Earth. . . ."³⁴ "For," he points out, "when once it was elevated for some few Miles, so as to be above that Orb of Magnetick Virtue, which is carried about by the Earth's diurnal Revolution, it might then be . . . directed" anywhere in the world. "If the Place which we intended," he continues, "were under the same Parallel, why then the Earth's Revolution once in Twenty four Hours, would bring it to be under us; so that it would be but descending in a straight Line, and we might presently be there."³⁵ Moreover, he observes, "the upper Parts of the World are always quiet and serene" and travelers would thus "be perfectly freed from all Inconveniences of Ways or Weather. . . ."³⁶ Again, like Rasselas, Wilkins, in chapter viii, refers to the "doubts" concerning "the extream Thinness" (and also coldness) of the "Æthereal Air" which—as in the case of whether heavy bodies can be supported in thin air—he has "resolved" in another discourse.³⁷ Finally, in the last paragraphs of the chapter, he discusses further some of the "particulars" which must be considered in the construction of a flying machine. And he suggests that a person attempting "any Thing to this Purpose"

should first make Enquiry what kind of Wings would be most useful to this End; those of a Bat being most easily imitable, and perhaps Nature

did by them purposely intend some Intimation to direct us in such Experiments; that Creature being not properly a Bird, because not amongst the Ovipara, to imply that other kind of Creatures are capable of Flying as well as Birds; and if any should attempt it, that would be the best Pattern for Imitation.³⁸

Assuming, then, that these numerous similarities between parts of the "Dissertation" and certain passages in "Dædalus" indicate a more or less direct borrowing from the earlier work, one may again consider briefly the reasons for Johnson's distinctive use of the material. For one thing, Rasselas has been discouraged by his own failure to find a means of exit from the valley and thus quite appropriately determines "to enquire further" before giving his approval to a very unusual experiment in transportation. And in what more suitable manner, Johnson might well ask himself, could the prince express his doubt than by raising a series of objections to the possibility of flying. Thus he could select from "Dædalus" three notions which together would form a logical, almost exhaustive, progression in the "Dissertation": i.e., (1) man cannot fly; (2) granted man can fly, he cannot fly far; and (3) granted man can fly far, he cannot breathe in the ether. On the other hand, the artist must answer Rasselas' criticisms, or else the flying attempt will not be made. Again "Dædalus" could supply the basis of these answers, which (since, for all their assurance, they are not real refutations of the prince's objections), when viewed in the light of the dismal failure of the flying experiment, help to create the ironical effect produced by the chapter as a whole. Similarly, the artist's glowing anticipation of the pleasures of air travel presents a striking contrast to the result of his actual leap. Once again "Dædalus" could provide the hint for this neat addition.

³⁴ "Dædalus," p. 127.

³⁵ *Ibid.* Italics mine.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

³⁷ *The discovery of a new world*, pp. 130–31, where Wilkins presents both problems; regarding the thinness of the air, he mentions that it may "make [the air] unfit for Expiration"; for, he notes, "In some Mountains (as Aristotle tells us of Olympus, and out of him St. Austin) the Air be so thin, that Men cannot draw their Breath, unless it were through some moistned Sponges . . ." (p. 130).

³⁸ "Dædalus," p. 129. Italics mine.

Finally, at the end of the objection-reply exchange, the artist could naturally be expected to reveal to the still hesitant Rasselas something about his specific plan for building the wings. And, again, Wilkins had discussed in some detail the advisability of modeling one's wings on those of the bat.

Following the artist's revelation of the proposed model for his wings, he and Rasselas discuss the need for secrecy concerning the flying project. The prince promises to tell no one of the "art." He visits "the work from time to time" and "remarked many ingenious contrivances to facilitate motion, and unite levity with strength." At last, when the wings are finished, the maker appears "furnished for flight on a little promontory." After waving "his pinions a while," he "leaped from his stand, and . . . dropped into the lake," from which "the prince drew him to land, half dead with terror and vexation."³⁹

Since "Dædalus" contains no passages paralleling the discussion between Rasselas and the artist about the possible evil uses of a flying contrivance, their remarks, must, for present purposes, be referred entirely to Johnson's own invention. But, toward the conclusion of chapter viii, Wilkins mentions "*special Contrivances, whereby the Strength of these Wings may be severally applied*, either to ascent, descent, progressive, or a turning Motion; all which, and divers the like Enquiries can only be resolved by particular Experiments."⁴⁰ Earlier, too, in the same chapter he recommends that the flying chariot take "its first Rise from some Mountain or other high Place."⁴¹ And in discussing

the previous efforts of artists attempting flight by wings, he attributes their almost universal failure to "their want of Experience, and too much Fear, which must needs possess Men in such dangerous and strange Attempts."⁴²

Controlled only by the data noted above, speculation about Johnson's procedure in composing roughly the last third of the "Dissertation" must be considerably less precise than the previous attempts at reconstruction. First of all, the paragraph on the need for secrecy concerning the flying machine—while forming an effective contrast to the artist's earlier rosy description of the delights of flying—cannot be paralleled by any of Wilkins' remarks on flying. Next, of Rasselas' periodic inspections of the wings under construction, one may say only that they are specific evidence of his continued interest in the experiment and that the "ingenious contrivances" he observes during his visits provide a tangible basis upon which to found his hope for its success. And in "Dædalus," it will be remembered, are references to various kinds of contrivances by means of which particular problems of flight might, perhaps, be solved. As for the artist's jump from the promontory, one may suppose that Johnson, in order to produce the striking effect actually achieved, would have decided that the account of the flight should be relatively brief. Suggestions for the initiation of the experiment and the subsequent "terror" of the projector were available in "Dædalus," and he may have drawn on them. In a single paragraph—the more forcible for its brevity—the flight begins and ends: the artist leaps into the air and drops into the lake. He is rescued—but Rasselas' hope of seeing the world via wings is lost.

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³⁹ Chapman, pp. 32-33.

⁴⁰ "Dædalus," p. 128. Italics mine. He continues: "[Flying] may at first perhaps seem perplexed with many Difficulties and Inconveniences, and yet . . . many things may be suggested to make it more facil and commodious" (pp. 128-29). In the *Dictionary* Johnson quotes this passage under "facile."

⁴¹ "Dædalus," p. 126.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 119.

COLERIDGE'S "CHRISTABEL" AND LEFANU'S "CARMILLA"

ARTHUR H. NETHERCOT

SEVERAL years ago in a study of Coleridge's poem "Christabel"¹ I advanced the then novel theory that the unfinished tale is essentially a vampire story, one of the first and by far the subtlest of the many such stories in the English language. The theory was received with considerable interest and general approval, though there were, of course, some partial or complete skeptics. I now wish to suggest that the long prose narrative "Carmilla," published with four other stories in *In a glass darkly* in 1872 by that once famed master of the Gothic, J. Sheridan LeFanu, contains so many strange parallels to "Christabel" that it seems possible that LeFanu had either made the same interpretation of Coleridge's poem as I was to make, and had reflected it, consciously or unconsciously, in his story; or else he had been reading more or less the same sources as Coleridge read, and applied them with often surprisingly similar results. For "Carmilla" is openly and admittedly a vampire story, and its author makes much of the way in which he, or at least one of his characters, Baron Vordenburg, has steeped himself in vampire lore.

First of all, the antagonists in both stories, Geraldine and Carmilla, are female vampires; and female vampires are comparatively rare, at least in the earlier period of vampirology. More than this, the main victims, Christabel and Laura, are women; and such restriction of sex—women to women—is even rarer. Kipling's version of the vampire, with her exclusive-

ly male quarry, is a purely modern refinement.

But there is also in the cases of both Coleridge and LeFanu an incipient attraction of the vampires to older men, the fathers of their main victims. Just as Sir Leoline at the first meeting is strangely drawn to Geraldine, who not only welcomes his fatherly embrace but prolongs it "with joyous look" and who is later the occasion of a violent quarrel between father and daughter because Christabel feels instinctively that there is something corrupt in Geraldine's exertion of her charms, so Laura's unnamed father is obviously allured by Carmilla. He flatters her with compliments, "gallantly" kisses her hand, holds it "very kindly," is solicitous about her health, and protests against her threat of leaving; and she seductively draws him on. Similarly, under her anagrammatic name of Millarca, she has previously fascinated old General Spielsdorf while she is getting his beautiful young daughter Bertha into her fatal toils.

As settings for these triangular relationships, Coleridge and LeFanu, since they are both obviously writing in the Gothic tradition, have chosen the traditionally isolated castle surrounded by woods. Coleridge's, it is true, is in Cumberland, whereas LeFanu's is in Styria—that is, in the notorious vampire district, consisting of Austria, Hungary, Moravia, etc., from which flowed practically all the best-attested vampire tales of the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, LeFanu, like Bram Stoker after him, felt impelled to link his story with England. LeFanu did

¹ *The road to Tryermaine: A study of the history, background, and purposes of Coleridge's "Christabel"* (Chicago, 1939).

so by making Laura's father English, although, as she admits, she herself "never saw England"; Stoker transports his hero, Jonathan Harker, from London to Count Dracula's eerie castle in Transylvania, but at the end takes Harker and Mina back to London again.

LeFanu's castle, than which nothing could "be more picturesque or solitary," "stands on a slight eminence in a forest" and has the regulation equipment of towers, drawbridge, moat, Gothic chapel, three-hundred-year-old furniture, with carved cabinets, gold inlays, tapestries, and all the rest. Coleridge's castle, although described more indirectly through incidental allusions, is sufficiently similar so that the one might be substituted for the other without making any essential changes necessary. More significant, however, is the fact that, within a few miles of each, through wild mountains and woods (somewhat farther in Coleridge than in LeFanu), lies another castle, from which, it is finally revealed, the terrible visitant has sprung or claims to have sprung. Coleridge's is named Tryermaine; LeFanu's Karnstein. Karnstein, it is true, has been in ruins for many years; Tryermaine, so far as Sir Leoline knows, still stands, but actually—according to Dr. James Gillman, Coleridge's physician, who insisted that his patient had confided to him his intended ending to the poem—when Sir Leoline's messenger arrived, he found that the castle had been washed away "by one of those inundations supposed to be common to this country."² Thus the settings and topography of the two stories are surprisingly similar.

Coleridge's Geraldine is first met by Christabel all alone at midnight, at the foot of a huge, ancient oak tree in the middle of a moonlit, but misty and barren,

April forest. LeFanu's Carmilla, it is true, is more gregarious. On a moonlit, but misty, summer evening, as Laura, her father, and her two governesses walk through the beautiful glade before the castle, they hear the sound of carriage wheels and many hoofs on the narrow road near by. The four carriage horses take fright and, too strong to be stopped by the four attendants on horseback, run away and are halted only when, at sight of "an ancient stone cross" on one side of the road, they swerve so that the wheels pass over the projecting roots of "a magnificent lime tree" standing on the other. The carriage is overturned, and thus the slightly injured Carmilla is delivered at her destination, to be left by her mysterious mother, obviously a "lady," to recover with Laura and her family. This entrance is certainly more spectacular than Geraldine's; but Geraldine has an even stranger story to relate to Christabel, of how she comes from "a noble line" and how "five warriors" seized her "yesternorn" without warning or reason, choked her, tied her on a white horse, rode furiously with her for over a day, and then abruptly deposited her under the oak tree, promising soon to return. Except for the claims of ancestry, the moonlit but misty nights, the two great trees, and the equine method of transportation, the circumstances under which the two vampires appear are quite different in detail, but a similar weird and supernatural atmosphere pervades both scenes.

Several elements of common superstition, moreover, are shared by the two stories. Carmilla's horses' fear of the cross is paralleled by Geraldine's fear of Christabel's lamp, which is fastened with a silver chain to "an angel's feet." Carmilla never prays; nor does Geraldine, although she once pretends that she is going to. Moreover, she feigns weariness when

² James Gillman, *The life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (London, 1838), p. 301.

Christabel suggests that they thank the Virgin for rescuing her, and says that she cannot speak. Carmilla, in fact, is hysterically upset when she is forced to hear prayers or hymns. Both girls have to be helped into the homes of their intended victims: Geraldine sinks down, "belike through pain," just as Christabel unlocks the postern gate, and Christabel has to carry her over the threshold "with might and main"; whereupon Geraldine quickly rises again and "moved, as she were not in pain." In the same fashion, after the accident, Carmilla has to lean on the governess's arm before she can walk "slowly over the drawbridge and into the castle gate." True to tradition, too, the dogs in the two stories sense the presence of something unnatural and menacing: Coleridge's "mastiff bitch" moans angrily in her sleep as Christabel leads her guest past the kennel; LeFanu's traveling mountebank's "rough spare dog . . . stopped short suspiciously at the drawbridge, and in a little while began to howl dismally." This dog, indeed, persists in howling all through the interview of the mountebank with Laura and Carmilla and does its best to further the efforts of its master to warn the unsuspecting Laura of her danger.

For both authors introduce special characters to alert the perceptive reader to what is going on. The mountebank, with his charms and magic paraphernalia, at once senses what is happening, and arouses Carmilla's great anger by his hints about her vampiric characteristics. He thus corresponds to Coleridge's Bard Bracy, whose vision the night before of the green snake throttling the gentle dove named Christabel should have told the infatuated Sir Leoline that his guest was up to no good. Toward the end of LeFanu's tale General Spielsdorf performs a similar function when he tries to convey the truth about Carmilla to Laura's father by hint-

ing about his own daughter's fate. In both cases, however, the two fathers are too obtuse to understand.

It is noteworthy also that both Coleridge and LeFanu introduce the dead mothers of their heroines in attempts to warn their daughters supernaturally. Christabel's mother, we are told, died in giving birth to her child; Laura's died in her child's "infancy." One of the most eerie scenes in Coleridge's poem involves the ghostly colloquy between Geraldine and Christabel's invisible and inaudible mother. Just after Christabel has conducted Geraldine into her bedchamber she exclaims mournfully, "O mother dear! that thou wert here!" and Geraldine thoughtlessly echoes the wish. Whereupon Coleridge continues:

But soon with altered voice, said she—
 "Off, wandering mother! Peak and pine!
 I have power to bid thee flee."
 Alas! what ails poor Geraldine?
 Why stares she with unsettled eye?
 Can she the bodiless dead espy?
 And why with hollow voice cries she,
 "Off, woman, off! this hour is mine—
 Though thou her guardian spirit be,
 Off, woman, off! 'tis given to me."³

LeFanu's episode varies somewhat in details, but in essence it is remarkably like Coleridge's. As Laura's illness, with its nightmares and visions, progresses, she begins to hear, again and again, "one clear voice, of a female's, very deep, that spoke as if at a distance, slowly, and producing always the same sensation of indescribable solemnity and fear." One night, however, the experience is varied, and she hears another voice, "sweet and tender, and at the same time terrible, which said, 'Your mother warns you to beware of the assassin.'" Laura awakes with a shriek, to see Carmilla "in her

³ For a full commentary on this scene, see the chapter entitled "The guardian spirit" in *The road to Tryermaine*, pp. 143-52.

white nightdress, bathed . . . in one great stain of blood." Nothing quite so horrible ensues in Christabel's case, except that she is bewildered and tries to quiet Geraldine in what she thinks is the latter's delirium; but the effect of the two scenes is the same.

It is, however, the nature of the relationship between the two pairs of girls that constitutes perhaps the most striking resemblance. Physically, Christabel and Laura seem to have looked much alike. LeFanu's heroine is a conventionally romantic maiden, young (nineteen at the beginning of her account of her adventure), with golden hair and large blue eyes. Coleridge's Christabel is also young and lovely, with ringlet curls and eyes which—the poet reiterates several times—are large and innocently blue. The theatrical contrast between blonde heroine and brunette villainess, however, is drawn more definitely by LeFanu, whose villainess has a rich complexion, small features, large, dark, lustrous eyes (which sometimes become "glittering"), and thick, long, dark-brown hair with a hint of gold in it. Geraldine's skin is very white, her eyes are bright, and she has "gems entangled in her hair." She is described as "tall," "stately," and "lofty." Carmilla, too, is "above middle height," slender and graceful. Geraldine's voice is "faint and sweet"; Carmilla's "very sweet." Carmilla is about the same age as Laura—in appearance, of course, not actuality. Geraldine, too, seems young, since she calls herself the daughter of Sir Leoline's youthful friend Lord Roland, but her dignity makes her seem older than Christabel.

But the remarkable thing about both Geraldine and Carmilla is that, in spite of their horrid intentions and conduct, they are by no means consistently unsympathetic villainesses. Over and over there are

hints that they are not fully responsible for their behavior, and an element of pity and understanding thus enters into the reader's attempt at judgment. It is at once apparent in both cases, of course, that there is something basically sinister in the sweetness and friendliness of Geraldine and Carmilla. They are so desirous of establishing physical contact with their victims that suspicion is immediately aroused. Christabel's fearful dreams as she sleeps in Geraldine's embrace after Geraldine has laid her spell of silence on her as to what she has seen are paralleled by Laura's dreams and frightful nightmares as her intimacy with Carmilla develops. Both victims feel and remember the pain and pangs of the nocturnal attack, and both feel a sense of lassitude and melancholy afterward. Since LeFanu's story covers a period of several months, whereas Coleridge's, being unfinished, extends only over several hours, Laura's symptoms have time to become much more pronounced, but Christabel's immediate future is pretty well indicated. As for the vampires, after the revolting blood transfusions have taken place, Geraldine is so refreshed and revitalized by her "sleep" that the next morning

her girded vests
Grew tight beneath her heaving breasts.

Carmilla also undergoes "delightful" sleep. She looks "charming. Nothing could be more beautiful than her tints." The vampire, of course, always thrives, while the victim goes into a mysterious decline.

But perhaps the main reason for the strange fascination of Coleridge's poem is that Geraldine usurps the place of the heroine in the reader's interest. She seems to be suffering under some strange compulsion. She talks about the unsightly blemish on her breast as "This mark of my

shame, this seal of my sorrow." She struggles against what she has to do. She tells Christabel how "All they who live in the upper sky" love the maid and how

for the good which me befel,
Even I in my degree will try,
Fair maiden, to requite you well.

She echoes Christabel's girlish wish that her mother were there—although she soon thereafter repents her sympathy. Yet Christabel herself feels that "All will yet be well."

Carmilla, too, exercises both repulsion and attraction on the reader as well as on Laura. From the outset, Laura confesses, she was "drawn towards" Carmilla, "but there was also something of repulsion. In this ambiguous feeling, however, the sense of attraction immensely prevailed." But Carmilla's affections and physical fondlings become excessive. They are "like the ardour of a lover." Carmilla, trusting in the other's unsuspecting innocence, describes herself and her condition openly: "In the rapture of my enormous humiliation I live in your warm life, and you shall die—die, sweetly die—into mine. I cannot help it; as I draw near to you, you, in your turn, will draw near to others, and learn the rapture of that cruelty, which yet is love. . . ." She talks of the beauty of dying "as lovers may—to die together so that they may live together." She admits that "every now and then the little strength I have falters," but she still insists, "You must come with me, loving me, to death; or else hate me, and still come with me, and *hating* me through death and after." Over and over she suffers these periods of almost hysterical confession, but nevertheless, LeFanu reminds his readers, "Except in these brief periods of mysterious excitement her ways were girlish." In fact, when Carmilla is viewed in the daytime she is invariably invested

with an aura of half-grudging but sympathetic attraction. It is only during her nocturnal excursions and depredations, in which she takes the form of a monstrous black cat or the "black palpitating mass" of some formless, unidentified creature, or during the final exposure scene, in which the family tomb in the ruins at Karnstein is discovered and its horrible contents destroyed, that her pure repulsiveness is stressed. (Incidentally, just as LeFanu in his portrayal of Carmilla in her vampire state projects her into a vague catlike form and Stoker sets his castle of Dracula in the midst of a region haunted by werewolves, so Coleridge apparently intended to develop a serpent affiliation in Geraldine.)

◀ In both Coleridge and LeFanu, then, the true central characters, the vampires, are paradoxes. They both attract and repel. They are not fully responsible for their actions. Why? LeFanu gives the answer through his expert on vampirology, "that quaint Baron Vordenburg"; it is an answer that Coleridge never explicitly gave but that explains Geraldine's basic motivation. For, as Carmilla inexorably puts it to Laura, "All things proceed from Nature—don't they? All things in heaven, in the earth, and under the earth act as Nature ordains? I think so." The Baron expatiates on this view at the end of the story: "It is the nature of vampires to increase and multiply, but according to an ascertained and ghostly law. . . . A person, more or less wicked, puts an end to himself. A suicide, under certain circumstances, becomes a vampire. That spectre visits living people in their slumbers; *they* die, and almost invariably, in the grave, develop into vampires." Thus innocent persons, through no act or volition of their own, may become vampires.

Early in their acquaintance Carmilla hints to Laura about a serious illness

which attacked her when she was very young. Shortly afterward, when they are gossiping about her first ball, she becomes more pathetically explicit: "I remember everything about it—with an effort. I see it all, as divers see what is going on above them, through a medium dense, rippling, but transparent. There occurred that night what has confused the picture, and made its colours faint. I was all but assassinated in my bed, wounded *here*,"—she touched her breast—"and never was the same since." Though she never puts the charge into words, Vordenburg later makes it clear that at this time she was attacked by a vampire lover. Thus the horrible plague is transmitted until the chain is severed by equally brutal action. Sometimes the vampire, or oupire, attacks people indiscriminately, with quick deaths resulting, as happens in the village near Laura's castle; but at other times it singles out some individual upon whom to prolong its feedings like an epicure—and, it would seem, in its own queer way, to prey upon "with an engrossing vehemence, resembling the passion of love." In these cases it often "seems to yearn for something like sympathy and consent." This sort of tender bloodthirstiness has activated Carmilla, or Millarca, or Mircalla, as she is variously known, until she is ultimately faced with exposure. Then she can give "a glare of skulking ferocity and horror" at her enemy; then "a brutalized change" can come over her features. Just so Geraldine, when Christabel and Bracy are on the verge of unmasking her to Sir Leoline, glowers balefully at Christabel with eyes "Each shrunk up to a serpent's eye," so that the girl stumbles, shudders "with a hissing sound," and falls swooning to the earth. Thus the "true" vampire lore has been exemplified through both Carmilla and Geraldine.

Certain other links between "Carmilla"

and "Christabel" might also be developed, such as the tendency of both authors to introduce moralistic and pious comments on their situations, their emphasis on the theme of friendship and reconciliation after quarrels (through Lord Roland and General Spielsdorf), and their common use of the term "preternatural."⁴ But these are minor matters.

It deserves to be pointed out in conclusion, however, that certain evidence suggests that LeFanu not only knew "Christabel" well but also had followed the controversy about it and was familiar with some of the speculations and interpretations which pursued it.⁵ One aspect of Gillman's continuation has already been referred to—the destruction of Lord Roland's castle. But there were two particularly scandalous explanations of "Christabel" which had been offered in the nineteenth century, both of which are suggested only to be dismissed or tacitly dropped in "Carmilla." Coleridge himself charged William Hazlitt with spreading the report that "Geraldine was a man in disguise" and that therefore "Christabel" had been called "the most obscene Poem in the English Language." To judge from later references, this interpretation evidently made some general impression.⁶ LeFanu is impelled to make Laura herself disclaim this explanation by having her conjecture to herself in chapter iv: "What if a boyish lover had found his way into the house, and sought to prosecute his suit in masquerade, with the assistance of a clever old adventuress? But there were many things against this hypothesis, highly interesting as it was to my vanity." The other scandalous interpretation, also sexu-

⁴ Spielsdorf in chap. x says that he has "been made the dupe of a preternatural conspiracy." For Coleridge's conception of his story see the chapter entitled "A 'romance' of the 'preternatural,'" *Road to Tryermaine*, pp. 185-214.

⁵ See *ibid.*, pp. 28-43.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34, 43.

al, was solidly but equivocally Lesbian. These suggestions are patent all through LeFanu's story, especially in Carmilla's amorous phraseology; a similar interpretation of "Christabel" was obviously in the minds of many of Coleridge's readers and commentators, such as Gillman, but nineteenth-century reticence on such matters was so delicate that one often has to read suspiciously between the lines of the reviews and the continuations to realize what was actually in the minds of the writers. It remained for the twentieth century, in such a book as Roy P. Basler's *Sex, symbolism, and psychology in literature*,⁷ to

expose and discuss openly in scientific terminology the illicit homosexual overtones in the relations between Geraldine and Christabel. A much easier case, of course, though I think not a true one either, could be made from the Carmilla-Laura affair.

Thus this comparison of "Carmilla" and "Christabel" indicates two main conclusions: that LeFanu's story lends some support to the theory that Coleridge's Geraldine was conceived, subtly but essentially, as a vampire, and that the influence of Coleridge's poem was still being felt in Gothic fiction in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

⁷ Rutgers University Press, 1949.

REVIEW ARTICLES

A NEW HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE¹

WE SEEM to have arrived at a period of stocktaking, of synthesis in literary history. Optimists might even speak of a revival of literary history-writing if we judge by the number, size, and quality of the publications of recent date which can be classed as histories of English and American literature. In England Sir Herbert Grierson and J. C. Smith published *A critical history of English poetry*; three volumes of the projected *Oxford history of English literature* are now on the market; there is the new *Literary history of the United States* in three large volumes. Before us lies *A literary history of England*, edited by Albert C. Baugh, which, under one stout cover, provides a history of English literature apportioned to five prominent American specialists: Kemp Malone has written 103 pages on the Anglo-Saxon period; A. C. Baugh, 207 on the Middle English; the late Tucker Brooke, 384 on the Renaissance, including Milton; George Sherburn, 412 on the Restoration and the eighteenth century; and Samuel Chew, 497 on literature up to about 1939. The book is thus actually five books in one. All or almost all are so different in approach, methods of procedure, and critical standards implied and professed that it seems best to discuss them separately. It seems unfortunate that the book is one more book-binder's synthesis: there was obviously no meeting of minds and no real attempt at co-ordination.

The first two sections are most similar to each other; they are excellent descriptive surveys of English medieval literature (with some attention to literature in Anglo-Norman and Latin). Both Malone and Baugh give a full account of the documents, with rich references to questions of authorship, date, provenience, sources, literary types, metrical forms, themes,

etc. There is, however, hardly any attempt to go beyond the information of a manual; no real characterization is ever attempted, no evaluation; and nothing is even done with such obvious problems as the social causes or the internal formal history of genres. The few attempts at criticism amount to little. In discussing the *Rood*, Malone says that it is "one of the glories of Old English literature: indeed of English literature as a whole. The introductory words of the dreamer could hardly be bettered, and the story of the Cross on Calvary has overwhelming poetic power and beauty." After quoting seventeen lines, he concludes: "Modern readers like the first 77 lines best, but the poem makes an organic whole" (pp. 78-79).

As far as one can discover, Malone values the literature as part of "our Germanic heritage" (p. 47). The fact that English later borrowed much from French and Latin is deplored as a "chronic case of linguistic indigestion" (p. 11). The section concludes with a quotation from R. W. Emerson on the "twenty-two thousand thieves that landed at Hastings" (p. 105).

Baugh contradicts Malone by considering the Normans as "not hostile to native tradition" (p. 117). Baugh's standards are not nationalistic; he rather looks at medieval literature with amused indulgence, as in it there is "much of the simplicity of the child" (p. 116). Still, "to the true humanist every effort of the race to express itself is of interest: it is not always for us to judge and to prove but to know and to understand" (p. 116). Literature thus is mainly a document for past ideas and tastes, but no real effort is made to define the nature of the relationship to the society or to characterize even the most important works. A little paragraph which tries to account for the greatness of *Piers plowman* merely rehearses stock praise which could be applied to almost

¹ *A literary history of England*, ed. Albert C. Baugh (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1948). Pp. xli + 1673.

any other work of serious literature: "powerful imagination," "vivid delineation of scenes," "evident sincerity," "moral earnestness" (p. 247). Even Chaucer is hardly given individuating characterization. In discussing the medieval religious lyric, Baugh says that the poems "occasionally startle us by their sheer beauty" and that "the piety and religious fervor which produced them are the guarantee of their emotional validity" (p. 215). We turn rather to the many quotations or are grateful for an excellent descriptive chapter on the drama. It is a learned manual but completely deficient as criticism, social history, or history of literary forms.

The tone and style of Tucker Brooke's section are quite different. It is well written, occasionally eloquent. Milton's sonnets are spoken of "as a hoard of ancient coins, few and precious. They are deeply, but frugally incised, heavy with significance and intrinsic worth, and for all posterity they bear a Caesarian superscription" (p. 680). Speaking of *Hamlet*, Brooke concludes: "One sees, then, how Shakespeare has lived himself into Hamlet till he produced . . . a perfect tabernacle for the questioning modern brain" (p. 529). Whatever one's feeling as to the illumination of such passages, there is no doubt that Brooke has critical standards, which he makes quite explicit. His love goes out to Spenser, Sidney, and Marlowe. Spenser is praised at the expense even of Chaucer and Shakespeare. "Even Chaucer's art may look puerile, and beside the tidal flow of Spenser even the great dramatist's method, with its spotlights and overhaste, may sometimes seem tinsel against the moonlight" (p. 501). Marlowe is the first great "romantic dramatist," who revealed the "protoplasmic life within." He planted the "magic flower of romance" in modern England. He was neither libertine nor atheist. *Hero and Leander* is "one of the purest things in Elizabethan poetry. In what he wrote there is not an obscene word or degenerate suggestion" (p. 514). There is "moral poise," an "abstention from impure suggestion in all Marlowe's original work" (p. 515). Even the villains of Shakespeare were better than we think. Iago is "romantically

and sympathetically conceived: a blindly wandering spirit whose evil is the perversion of potentialities for good" (p. 537). Lady Macbeth's "urgency for crime is so wholly altruistic and so uncomprehending as to be almost virtuous" (p. 537). Webster is "the most romantic of dramatists." Reading him "is a kind of religious experience and if any affinity for him must be sought among the Stuart writers, it will be found in such mystic poets as Herbert and Vaughan" (p. 550). Herbert, of course, is not a follower of Donne. "For a proper parallel to his glowing art . . . one must go back to the art of the Old French troubadours" (p. 643).

The gentleman Marlowe, pure in body and mind, is not convincing; nor is the good Iago or the Herbertian Webster. Brooke draws other surprising analogies. Wyatt is preferred to Surrey, but for reasons which it would be difficult to anticipate. His songs are praised most because "the poetry that in quality they most resemble is perhaps that which appeared in 1896 in *A Shropshire Lad*" (p. 340). The critical standard for this preference is clearly announced, since, according to Brooke, "the expression of personal feeling in the simplest and briefest form is itself the highest poetry" (p. 341). Even where Brooke admires something grander, he seems to admire mostly isolated lines. In *Faustus* he finds lines which "glisten and writhe like burnished serpents" (p. 509), lines like

I'll burn my books, Ah! Mephistophilis.

A skeptical reader will object that these lines are mere prose and even commonplace outside their context and that "the expression of personal feeling in the simplest and briefest form" would depress Shakespeare, Milton, and even Spenser far below Burns or Thomas Moore. But then it is also clear what are Brooke's dislikes and what is the polemical undercurrent of the section. Donne is criticized for "never having found anchorage in the arts." He wrote with "more emphasis than he feels"; his "literary integrity must be questioned"; the *Anniversaries* are "at least poetically untruthful." "Donne was the sort of man whose purest depths could not be stirred without bringing up also a good deal of obscenity and inconse-

quence. They are all dumped together, often in the same poem, as in *The Relic*, which opens with two solemn lines:

When my grave is broke up again,
Some second guest to entertain:

then plummets into the mire in a parenthesis,
(for graves have learn'd that womanhead,
to be to more than one a bed),

and at once mounts to the zenith" (p. 633). But the parenthesis cannot be judged in isolation from the total poem, where it makes an ironic counterpoint; and, even pulled out of the context, it is hardly a shocking or very novel idea which would justify the term "mire." The atomistic, romantic, and moralistic preconceptions of Brooke's criticism are here startlingly revealed. We are not surprised at the *obiter dictum* that "too acute interest in contemporary letters is usually a bad symptom in a university" (p. 553).

But, even if we disregard the critical conceptions running through the section—all the references to sincerity, moral purity, autobiographical truth, and songlike lyricism—it seems impossible to find much merit in Brooke's strictly descriptive criteria. Donne, Browne, Taylor, and Howell are grouped as the "Baroque Glory." Sir Walter Raleigh, Chapman, Ben Jonson, and Donne are called the "Olympians," a term which distinguishes these great names from the "moral," the "academic," and the "courtly" tradition in poetry. The term "romanticism" (four times on p. 473) is most frequently used in the chapter on Sidney. "The uncertainties and disappointments of his own career heightened in him that democratic independence of mind which makes romanticism potent" (p. 473). The *Defense of poetry* is a "romantic work, for all its dependence on neo-classical learning," as it vindicates "the spirit of poetry as opposed to the details of form and content"; it shows a "democratic attitude—that is, its sweet reasonableness" (p. 477).

Brooke's section is closely confined to imaginative literature; there is hardly anything said on the social background or on the history of ideas. From his account one could not guess what problems are raised by More's *Utopia* or

Bacon's philosophy or Hooker's theology. The section, learned as it is in its wealth of external information, seems a typical example of the common combination of antiquarian learning and romantic sensibility—the latter produces such phrases as the "sacred lyre struck with lively resonance" by Giles Fletcher, the "opal-lescent and kaleidoscopic" quality of Spenser, the "starry symphonies" and "ancient coins" of Milton. But there is hardly anything besides such emotional adjectives and picturesque analogies and factual information on biography, bibliography, sources, etc. We get no history of ideas, no history of literary forms, no social explanation of the literature.

Sherburn's section is again completely different. It is, to my mind, the most satisfying part of the book: well planned, well informed (which goes without saying), lucidly and soberly written, animated by a sympathetic understanding of the literature of neoclassicism, its ideas and forms. In contrast with the earlier sections of the book we get systematic accounts of the social conditions of literature, of the main trends in the history of ideas and the critical opinions accompanying the literature. Sherburn had the advantage of considerably more space; he can devote several pages to poets such as Matthew Prior or John Gay. He has also the advantages of being able to summarize the body of research on the eighteenth century done during the last decades, mostly in America, which, especially since the papers of Lovejoy and the books of Louis Bredvold, Austin Warren, and Mark Van Doren, has been inspired by a real sympathy for the viewpoints of the time. Sherburn is particularly interested in dispelling common misconceptions of the age, "facile assertions of emotional deficiencies and artificialities of the period" (p. 709). He strongly insists that the later eighteenth century should not be judged through the spectacles of later romanticism. There was "no conscious rebellion, no intention to undermine neo-classicism." Sherburn, it seems to me, goes too far in condemning the use of the very word "romanticism," but, as I have elsewhere argued in its defense (in "The concept of romanticism," *Comparative literature* [Eugene, Ore., 1949], Nos. 1 and 2), I will not repeat my

apologia. Actually he cannot help seeing the eighteenth century also in terms of a movement toward something new, which we are accustomed to call "romantic." Thomson is recognized as a "pioneer" in the "movement to reform poetry" (p. 942). "His extensive Continental influence is with justice regarded as 'romantic'" (p. 942 n.). A chapter is called "Accentuated tendencies" (p. 967), without defining their goal; but what is described is what is usually called "preromantic tendencies," the "drift of opinion," which is not refuted by pointing out that it is possible to exaggerate the conscious "romanticism" of such men as Young, Hurd, or the Wartons (p. 988). But Sherburn is quite properly impatient with the crude dichotomy that the two terms are likely to introduce and does not really ignore the important fact of the rise of a new period.

At times Sherburn could be criticized for indulging in too facile causal explanations. Gibbon's style is explained psychoanalytically: "a physically small man himself, he compensates with a pompous style of rhythmic sonority" (p. 1087). Dryden's and his time's devotion to translation and satire is considered "accidental," due to such causes as the "need to gratify patrons, to defend 'sacred truths,' and to make a living which compelled both Dryden and Pope to inhabit in Swift's phrase 'the lowlands of Parnassus'" (p. 722). This seems a narrowly rationalistic explanation for a process of much deeper significance: the drying-up of the myth-making faculty, which surely had its social, ideological, and psychological reasons. Nor would a technical philosopher be content with Sherburn's accounts of Locke, Berkeley, and Hume (characteristically, the bibliographies ignore the more philosophical literature almost completely) or with the thin and grudging account of William Law. But, in his quiet way, Sherburn has a real power of characterization, a warm critical sympathy (which, however, does not blind him to weaknesses or deter him from occasional severe judgments, e.g., on the *Vicar of Wakefield*), and a sense for the movement and changes of poetic styles and tastes, a feeling for the process of history which seems almost entirely lacking in the first three sections.

Chew has the largest body of literature to survey and makes his task even more difficult by interpreting the term "literature" in the widest possible sense. He gives a great deal of information on backgrounds, even going into such topics as the changes in the British administrations (p. 1280) or the rise of evolutionism, with fairly technical details about Darwinianism (p. 1305). Occasionally, he realizes that, e.g., Mill's *Logic* "scarcely belongs, by any stretching of the terms of definition, to literature" (p. 1323), and, at times, he gives no account of the intellectual position of such men as Buckle, Lecky, or Bagehot (pp. 1332-33).

There are many good pages and paragraphs in Chew's section, especially in the discussions of authors whom Chew likes and sympathizes with, such as Swinburne, Meredith, Hardy, and Conrad. His critical standards are those of the early twentieth century: he frowns on the "Moderns" and thus joins the company of Sampson and Sir Herbert Grierson in making the later sections polemics against modern taste. He is particularly exasperated by T. S. Eliot and his "arrogant" criticism (cf. pp. 1468 n., 1583), he confesses candidly his "distaste for Hopkins" (p. 1537 n.), and he writes most unsympathetically of James Joyce and even Henry James. He prefers Spender to Auden and concludes the section on modern poetry with a masterpiece of cautious criticism: "Apart from them stands Francis J. R. Bottrall (1906—) whose *Festivals of Fire* (1934) and *The Turning Path* (1939) may one day win him more renown than has yet come to him" (p. 1588). Modern critics (with the exception of Eliot) are, "to obviate invidiousness, considered in chronological order" (p. 1602), but neither I. A. Richards nor F. R. Leavis nor W. Empson is even mentioned.

Thus one will hardly turn to Chew's section for an account of recent literature. The Romantic and Victorian periods are treated, of course, with much greater sympathy and wider knowledge, frequently with commonly held but unexamined criteria. Thus Chew assumes that biographical information *eo ipso* illuminates the work. The section on Thackeray begins with a characteristic paragraph (p. 1355) deploring Thackeray's reticence on his life. In

discussing the causes of Housman's pessimism, Chew asks a series of rhetorical questions for which "some truth in an affirmative answer to each" is assumed. "Is it to be traced to a lasting melancholy caused by the early death of an adored mother? Or is it to be ascribed to disappointment and wounded pride when he failed in 'Greats' at Oxford? Was there a tragic love affair of which the secret has been kept?" (p. 1545). "Criticism of Hardy's *A Laodicean* is disarmed by the fact, that, having been contracted for, it was composed during convalescence from a severe illness" (p. 1466). There are also many other assumptions of nineteenth-century criticism: the badness of symbolism ("the shadow of symbolism in Blake," p. 1135), the value of "sincerity," which redeems the mawkishness of Hood's "Bridge of sighs" (p. 1254), or the indorsement of Lowell's saying on *Sordello*, "it was a fine poem before the author wrote it" (p. 1394), which strangely assumes that a theme or conception, *before* a poem, can be poetry, and even fine poetry.

But the basic criticism of Chew's section and, one feels, of the whole genre of the encyclopedic "literary history" is its utter unpredictability as to the particular information or aspect of a work which the historian is supposed to discuss and the utter haphazardness with which causal explanations—social, biographical, intellectual, etc.—are conjured up. To give a few examples: the only thing we hear of Wordsworth's *Peter Bell* is that it "provoked much ridicule" (p. 1147), a generalization about its reception. The only thing said about the *Mill on the Floss* is that "it ends distressingly" (p. 1380), a hint at the effect on a reader of the final pages. *Old mortality* is only called "splendid" (p. 1211), and a great scene is elsewhere referred to (p. 1229). Arnold's poems are discussed by giving an abstract of the philosophy implied in them under headings such as "doubt," "conduct," "the self-contained soul," "stoicism," "despair" (pp. 1410-11). Similarly, the "hedonism" of the *Rubaiyat* is summarized as if it were the statement in a philosophical dissertation (pp. 1417-18). On the other hand, the *Ancient mariner* and *Kubla Khan* are described purely in terms of J. L. Lowes's researches into their sources, and

hardly anything is said of Coleridge's criticism and philosophy. While one could not complain that Chew does not give his critical opinion of many authors, in some chapters hardly any criticism is attempted: e.g., Shelley's short lyrics are not discussed, and the question of Shelley's rank as a poet is not even raised. Nor can one find any consistent treatment of the question of foreign relations; there are many scattered remarks on them, but on occasion the crucial relation is not even mentioned, e.g., in the highly laudatory discussion of Housman the name of Heine does not occur.

One must recognize the tremendous difficulties with which Chew was confronted when he conceived his task as that of listing hundreds of authors and titles and combining this information with social history, intellectual history, literary criticism, etc. Obviously, all the assumptions and conventions of his task need discussion. Can we break away from the strange mixture of biography, bibliography, anthology, information on themes and metrical forms, sources, attempts at characterization and impressionistic evaluation, sandwiched into background chapters on political, social, and intellectual history? Something, surely, could be done to rationalize and systematize, to make the existing procedures neater and clearer; Sherburn's section or the new *Literary history of the United States* shows that careful planning can achieve a better balance and continuity. It would be possible to pay separate attention to the social institutions of literature (periodicals, salons, etc.), the intellectual background, the history of criticism, the setting within the general European tradition. It would be possible to adhere to some one conception of the nature and scope of literature. The writer could make up his mind how much attention should be devoted to biography, what and how much should be quoted from the texts, and what description of each work should be given. It is not an impossible task.

But, even if we rationalize and systematize the existing procedures, we may still feel dissatisfaction with the whole genre, the encyclopedic accumulation of information and discussions now called "literary history." Is it not possible to envisage a literary history which would

have a clearly defined theme, would trace a historical process and progression, tell the growth, the changes, the ups and downs of literary art, its devices, its styles, its genres?

This ideal has been denied, most forcibly in Croce's paper (written in 1917), "La Riforma della storia artistica e letteraria" (printed in *Nuovi saggi di estetica* [2d ed.; Bari, 1926], pp. 157-80). There Croce argues that a history of artistic devices, procedures, and styles is concerned only with "material things external to art." "From a series of works of art we can never abstract other general characters except those relating to their matter because the act of abstraction dissipates and destroys the individuality of the work and also dissipates and destroys art as art." Thus literary history is impossible except as compilations and manuals. Hence literary study has turned increasingly to the essay and monograph; and this is as it should be, for its task is merely that of characterization and evaluation of single authors and their works.

But Croce's view seems impossible to uphold except at the cost of a total surrender of any kind of discourse on art. The Crocean view that the act of abstraction dissipates and destroys the individuality of a work of art is valid *a fortiori* for any criticism even of a single work of art. All criticism is, after all, carried on by means of words, and all words, by their nature, are universals which can stand only in an analogous relation to the actual works of literature. If we wanted to reproduce the individual work in all its concrete individuality, we could do nothing more than reprint it. The process of criticism is a process of abstraction, and this is true whether we speak of an individual work or of a group of works. Croce would not admit that political, intellectual, etc., histories are concerned with generalities. "They are always histories of particular acts, of a particular doctrine, of particular customs, of a particular institution, of a particular political event: all have their proper theme which is therefore circumscribed and individualized, particular and never general (except as a figure of speech), because in every history, as Machiavelli wisely observed, nothing counts that is not 'described particularly.'" But it is not

clear why the same reflections should not apply to literary history which will also be concerned, for all practical purposes, with a particular age, a particular genre, a particular theme or device and their development which are comparable to institutions as social "facts of coercion." Nor does Croce seem consistent when he admits the propriety and necessity, in a monograph on a poet, of problems of development, of "how an artist in his beginnings will try to imitate existing art, how in his imitations he will introduce more and more contradictory elements . . . and how at last, he will find himself and create something original." Why could not the same story be told of the Elizabethan drama, the eighteenth-century novel, or even the history of imagery or verse in English poetry?

A history of a genre or of the art of literature at a given period is nothing mysterious, far-fetched, or impossible. It has been done in many good books, though frequently in all kinds of intermixtures with intellectual history, the history of sentiment, biography, etc. It is a problem completely analogous to that which confronts the historian of the English constitution, the classical symphony, the rise of "perspective" Renaissance painting, or Christian dogma. We must cease to be inspired by a desire for encyclopedic completeness, for the summary and panorama which have led to the present ragbag type of "literary history." Roman Jakobson wittily ridiculed it many years ago when he compared the usual literary history to "police who are supposed to arrest a certain person, arrest everybody and carry off everything they find in the house and all the people who pass by chance on the street. Thus the historians of literature appropriate everything—the social milieu, psychology, politics, philosophy. Instead of literary scholarship there arose a conglomeration of derivative disciplines" (*Noveyshaya russkaya poeziya* [Prague, 1921], p. 11). Literary historians tell us of the changes in cabinets, of the repeal of the Corn Laws, the discussions on evolution, the condemnation of Bishop Colenso, the love affairs of Shelley and Byron, the payments received for the Waverley novels, the history of the Don Juan story, etc., and then have not

the time and space to discuss the books themselves and lack the patience and preparation to find out what seem the basic facts of literary history. Confronted even with the comparatively simple task of writing the history of genres at a given time, the historian will be constantly faced with problems which nobody seems to have thought about, and a full literary history will have to wait until many of these questions have been answered in detail. We lack even an analysis of the relevant devices and procedures, themes and forms, and are thus unable to answer elementary questions as to their derivation or the priority of their employment by different authors. Besides, in writing history it is not sufficient to put a series of critical analyses into a chronological order. If the actual flow of history is to be revealed, we should show how an author

changed the existing patterns, how and in what direction and, finally, why. The last seems the most obscure question, which cannot be answered by references to biographical accidents, psychological makeups, or even general social causes. Both sequence, introduction, and disappearance of artistic procedures, forms, and themes can, however, be traced, and an explanation of the causes of these changes can be attempted. Only then will it be possible to write a literary history in the proper sense of the term. Today the usual "literary history" is a hodgepodge of methods, topics, and procedures, a ragbag of information and criticism, history and anthology, of which Baugh's volume provides an example which must be judged to be a highly favorable specimen of the kind.

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IMAGERY AND MEANING IN THE INTERPRETATION OF *KING LEAR*

SINCE the publication in 1935 of Caroline Spurgeon's elaborate investigation of the imagery of Shakespeare's plays, an increasingly large proportion of critical studies of the plays, whatever the differences of theory that have distinguished them, have taken the recurrent images of the plays as their primary data, often with the more or less explicit assumption that a careful study of these apparently less obvious and calculated elements is likely to bring us nearer to Shakespeare or his meaning than is the study of such more obvious elements as plot, character, and thought. It is probably safe to say that, at the present time, studies of Shakespearean imagery constitute, along with investigations of the relation of the plays to Renaissance or medieval thought (and the two sorts of study are frequently combined), the dominant modes of critical scholarship dealing with Shakespeare. Professor Heilman's book on *King Lear*¹ is, I believe, the most extensive single analysis of a Shakespearean play using its poetic imagery as the

basic materials of investigation. Although it seems to me to be in almost all respects a bad book, it raises, in crucial form and with respect to a very great text, so many questions of importance both to the criticism of Shakespeare and to the study of literature generally as to justify fairly extended consideration.²

Professor Heilman finds that the meaning of *King Lear*, and hence its structure and unity as a work of art, are most fully indicated in the patterns of recurrent images. When so read, it is "finally a play about the ways of looking at and assessing the world of human experience" (p. 28; cf. also pp. 133-34): its theme is intellectual conquest and salvation through imaginative vision.³ It exhibits "the efforts of a

¹ Since completing this review, I have seen Oscar James Campbell's discussion of "Shakespeare and the 'New Critics,'" (*Joseph Quincy Adams memorial studies* [Washington, D.C., 1948], pp. 81-96); the general views expressed in this essay are in most respects similar to his. For other criticism of symbolic interpretations of Shakespeare see E. E. Stoll, "An *Othello* all-too modern," *ELH*, XIII (1946), 46-58, and "Symbolism in Shakespeare," *MLR*, XLIII (1947), 9-23.

² See, e.g., pp. 70, 83, 84-85, 86, 87, 91, 98, 100, 112, 115-16, 129-30, 144, 164, 179, 197, 217, 221-22, 228-29, 263, 278, 283.

³ Robert Bechtold Heilman, *This great stage: image and structure in "King Lear"* (Louisiana State University Press, 1948).

sensitive but, in its haste and passion and initial inflexibility, not very well-equipped, mind to come to terms with, to master, a cosmos whose complexity and recalcitrancy we have always tangible and solidly visible before us" (p. 214). In his plans for dividing his kingdom and in his treatment of his daughters, Lear imposes upon the world a false, rationalistic standard of values when he should have relied upon imaginative insight, which alone is capable of making essential determinations of quality; this imposition, which is Lear's tragic flaw, brings to power the daughters, who embody in a pure form this shrewd but ultimately false rationalism; and, when he tries to accommodate their actions toward him to his innate but hitherto unrecognized standard of values, Lear goes mad. But in his madness, which is structurally the climax of the play, is regeneration: Lear, "by expiatory suffering, undergoes a spiritual recovery, an imaginative waking; Shakespeare pictures him as coming again to an apprehension of values of which he had lost sight" (pp. 228-29). Since the play is a tragedy and not a melodrama, the inner and private conflict in *King Lear* coincides with a public or outer struggle—the conflict in Lear and Gloucester between reason and imagination as appropriate sources of values and faculties of understanding is paralleled and intensified by the external conflict between a set of shrewd, worldly people (Goneril, Regan, Edmund, Cornwall) and a set of apparently helpless incompetents (Edgar, the Fool, Lear), in which the first group, despite initial successes, stops at superficial understanding, and the latter, despite apparent failure, achieves profound insight into the nature of the world and man. The "central paradox" of the play, illuminating the spiritual progress of Lear and the external conflict alike, is that "the poor naked wretches of the play, the victims of the world, will survive in spirit. The gorgeous are doomed. In proud array, Lear failed; uncovered, half-naked, he is saved" (p. 86).

After a chapter of "Critical preliminaries" in which he sets forth some of the elements of his theory and gives a general account of the play, Professor Heilman devotes a chapter of his book to each of the chief patterns of poetic

imagery in which he finds the meaning and structure of *King Lear* conveyed. The *sight pattern* (chap. ii), in which such "dramatic facts" as the blindness of Gloucester are combined with metaphors and explicit references involving sight and blindness, points the importance and difficulty of seeing and judging correctly; it is allied most closely to the *madness pattern* (chaps. viii and ix), in which Lear's madness co-operates with many images of madness and folly to suggest that man's fate in the world, and the possibilities of his salvation, depend on his mode of understanding. These two patterns, to which is joined a scheme of images based on the root concept of *values* (chap. vii), are concerned generally with "the process and method of *understanding* and coming to terms with" a complex world (p. 179; Heilman's italics)—the sight imagery with man's ability to recognize and identify phenomena, the madness imagery with his ability to interpret them. Taken together, these three patterns illuminate the problems faced by man as a perceptive moral agent; the remaining patterns set forth "in complex detail" the reality which he seeks to understand. The *clothes imagery* (chap. iii) underlines the problem of distinguishing between appearance and reality; the many *animal* images (chap. iv) join to form a pattern that suggests the ease with which man may be degraded from his proper humanity; the references to *nature* and to deviations from the natural (chap. v) bring into play rival conceptions of nature as a norm and emphasize the dependence of judgment and action on man's conception of the natural; another scheme, centering on the concept of *age* (chap. vi), points to the relativity of such a human condition to the values by which it is judged; and the *justice pattern* (chap. vi), extending the implications of the nature imagery, emphasizes the difficulties of just action in a complex world. All these patterns and the dramatic facts to which they are related set forth "the problem of The World": "the great in the world seem to use their greatness badly or to achieve it at the cost of all spiritual values; these values are preserved best by those whom the world rejects" (p. 252). But *King Lear* does not rest in the assertion of an enig-

ma; we are not left to wonder what security the victims of the world may hope to achieve. A final, and culminating, pattern implies, if it does not directly assert, the resolution. The *religion pattern*, composed of the many references in the play to the gods, "ties together the other observations upon man and gets hold of the nature of man in the most inclusive terms" (p. 255; cf. also pp. 277-78), resolving the paradoxes implied by the other patterns by suggesting that

in the face of injustice man may believe in justice because the eternal gods will execute it. Man may speak in terms of a Nature which is Law because it is ordained by the gods whom he can invoke. The blind man sees because he can have insight into the divine reality. The sanity of the mad is that they can understand eternal truth [p. 255].

This summary, while it is, I believe, just to the main lines of Professor Heilman's interpretation, gives no indication of the enormous mass of detail in which the various patterns of imagery are worked out, of the manifold interconnections and paradoxical linkages that he discovers between the various parts of the play, or of the numerous subsidiary and co-operating significances which he integrates into the larger thematic movements. But it will suffice, perhaps, as background for discussion of some of Professor Heilman's assumptions, methods, and discoveries.

We may begin by noticing some features of his theory of drama set forth in the "Critical preliminaries."⁴ It is, he tells us, "a theory of meaning" (p. 12): a play or a tragedy or, at any rate, *King Lear* (Professor Heilman is not very much interested in distinctions of this kind; I suspect, although he nowhere says so, that his remarks apply to any literary work whatsoever) is a "structure of meanings." It makes, however indirectly or ironically, an ultimate assertion; it conveys a "total meaning," usually in the form of a paradox, of which a considerable number of subordinate meanings

are the parts (parts related to the total meaning not as items to an arithmetical sum but "organically," the parts often "scarcely distinguishable parts of a whole" [p. 175]). What is fundamental in Professor Heilman's analysis is therefore the subject or "problem" to which the total meaning of the play and its parts is related; to this subject everything in the play metaphorically refers:

... A series of dramatic statements about one subject does constitute a bloc of meaning which is a structural part of the play. This bloc may be understood as one of the author's metaphors. It is a metaphor just as a body of recurrent images, with its burden of implications, is a metaphor. The dramatist's basic metaphor is his plot. All of his metaphors are valid parts of his total meaning, the search for which must include a study of the relationship among the parts. All the constituent metaphors must be related to the large metaphor which is the play itself [pp. 11-12; cf. also p. 153].

Though equally valid, the various metaphors which constitute the play's meanings are not equally revelatory: they form a hierarchy, in which the plot—the overt "dramatic facts"—is basic in the sense of being at the lowest level and expressing the meaning least fully. Although the play may be summarized in a fashion by taking it "simply at the level of plot," such a procedure gives us only "partial outlines" of its tragic form; "in its fullness," we are told, "the structure can be set forth *only* by means of the patterns of imagery" (p. 32, italics mine; cf. also pp. 33, 38). That the poetic imagery should express the play's "inner" or "symbolic" meanings more adequately than do the characters and their actions, that the patterns should be parts in a more essential way than the latter, is, of course, inevitable in such a scheme as Mr. Heilman's; for if a play is a large metaphor for the author's attitude toward a problem, we must expect to find that words, with their manifold potentialities for combination and suggestion, provide a more appropriate vehicle for the expression of inner symbolic meanings than do the more severely limited happenings and their agents; and, since the theory posits that metaphor is the "basic constituent of form" and takes the language of drama as the primary object of critical

⁴ My discussion of Professor Heilman's literary theory is limited to a few of its more serious disadvantages for dramatic interpretation. For a more comprehensive criticism of a critical theory with which his has much in common see R. S. Crane, "Cleanth Brooks; or, the bankruptcy of critical monism," *MP*, XLV (1948), 226-45.

investigation (p. 4), it is not surprising that words should turn out to be the most significant feature of the play.

But if the play as a whole and its constituent parts are metaphors, if they signify their meanings not literally but symbolically, then it follows that when Professor Heilman assigns a meaning to something in *King Lear*, his statement must take the form "*A is like B*" rather than of "*A is B*," where A is some element of the play and B its alleged meaning. We must keep this fact always in mind in reading what he has to tell us about *King Lear*; for the exigencies of composition sometimes permit him a license in the use of the copula through which a literal reading of the play might be mistakenly inferred. Thus, when he says (p. 35) that Lear's abdication is "a kind of refusal of responsibility, a withdrawal from a necessary involvement in the world of action," we must not take him literally; what he means, if the play is a metaphor, is that Lear's action is *like* a refusal and a withdrawal. These terms—like "the immaculateness of nonparticipation" and the "attempted elusion of the fettering of circumstance"—have only a remote relation to Lear's plan to "unburthen'd crawl toward death" and to prevent future strife by immediate publication of his daughters' dowries. No character in the play criticizes Lear's aims in the abdication, but only his means of effecting them—the transfer of the kingdom to Goneril and Regan and the banishment of Kent and Cordelia.

This example illustrates a consequence of Mr. Heilman's theory more important than the symbolism which it entails: the primary source and guaranty of the symbolic values that he attaches to elements of the play are not in Professor Heilman's inductions from the evidence of the text but in the necessities of his own theories of tragedy and morality; as in the passage just quoted, the symbolism contradicts, or is irrelevant to, the plain meaning of the text. The critic's theory functions in relation to his analysis not so much in suggesting possible modes of artistic combination or effect that *may* be found as in stipulating what *must* be found; and his reading is therefore arbitrary in the sense that fundamental control over it is

exercised not by the work but by a preclusive doctrine which dictates the nature of the basic symbolic relations in the play. The essentially arbitrary procedure to which his theory of tragedy leads can be seen in a few examples of symbolic interpretation as Professor Heilman practices it, first in the explication of details of diction and then in the elucidation of the larger metaphorical meanings of the play as a whole.

Professor Heilman's chapter on the sight pattern supplies several characteristic examples of the strange results which follow his effort to work into the pattern all the references to sight and blindness in the play. To the ordinarily acute reader, I venture to say, the following exchange between Edmund and Gloucester would seem innocent enough of ulterior significance:

GLOU.: What paper were you reading?

EDM.: Nothing, my lord.

GLOU.: No? What needed, then, that terrible dispatch of it into your pocket? the quality of nothing hath not such need to hide itself. Let's see: come, if it be nothing, I shall not need spectacles.

EDM.: I beseech you, sir, pardon me. . . .

GLOU.: Give me the letter, sir.

EDM.: I shall offend, either to detain or give it. The contents, as in part I understand them, are to blame.

GLOU.: Let's see, let's see.*

Professor Heilman finds a fine irony in the diction: "just when Gloucester most fails to see where he is going, he feels, like Oedipus, most shrewd and observant." The sight pattern, he says, "points the issue for us": "while he is being made to see things as Edmund wishes Gloucester feels that he is detecting the truth"—three times he says "Let's see," but he does not see (p. 45). But it is obvious that, when Gloucester asks to see the letter, he does not feel shrewd or observant or as if he were detecting the truth—he feels the impatience of the curious and interested man when teased; his remarks would be appropriate to anyone, however illuminated he might be spiritually, in such a situation. And since Edmund's plan unfolds only as the scene progresses and since

* Act I, scene 2, ll. 30–45. All references to *King Lear* are to the Kittredge text.

we do not yet know that Gloucester will be taken in by it, we are scarcely in a position to appreciate the irony, even if it were present.

Having got this far from Shakespeare, Mr. Heilman forges ahead into the darkness:

It is altogether logical, then, that Edmund's next move against Edgar takes place *at night* (II. i): the physical darkness betokens Gloucester's failure to see into what is going on. The actors in the nocturnal setting, indeed, represent more than one phase of a human plight: Gloucester victimizes and Edgar is victimized—he flees at night—because of the same kind of unseeingness. It is a meaningful, not merely a rhetorical, irony when Edmund calls, "Light, ho, here! . . . Torches, torches! . . ." (33-34): those who want light least can call for it most loudly. Then Gloucester enters—how? ". . . with torches" (38)—the agent of light, but a kind of light—a physical reality like his eyes—that does him no good; it is inner illumination that he needs [pp. 45-46; Heilman's italics].

The "logic" which Mr. Heilman discovers in the nocturnal setting for Edmund's next move is his, not Shakespeare's; for Edmund is surprised to learn that Cornwall is on his way to Gloucester's castle and decides on the spur of the moment to seize the opportunity thus presented for completing his design against Edgar. Edmund's call for torches is clearly part of his plan to appear to aid in the apprehension of Edgar; no one would have thought it merely rhetorical, but its meaning can scarcely be what Mr. Heilman says it is, for Edmund needs the lights very badly indeed—if there are none, no one will see his wound. That Gloucester in a scene laid at night and in answer to an urgent cry for torches should enter "with torches" seems to Professor Heilman, intent upon his symbols, a veritable prodigy of metaphorical contrivance. The torches have shifted their symbolic allegiance in the space of four lines: when Edmund called for them, they were the kind of inner illumination he least wanted to have turned upon him; but now, when Gloucester carries them in, they are just ordinary physical lights, and the inner illumination has gone glimmering. Mr. Heilman goes on to attach a heavy symbolic weight to the references in the scene to the fact that Regan's visit to Gloucester's castle takes place at night (his

count is wrong: there are four of these references in the scene, not just two); Regan, the point is, joins Edmund among those who must utilize the dark for their schemes. There are two excellent reasons for the references to darkness in the scene, neither very recondite: one is that it was customary, in plays acted in the afternoon, to aid the spectators' imaginations by verbal and spectacular identification of the physical scene—hence the references to night (and the torches);⁶ second, that Regan uses the fact of their having traveled at night as proof of the importance of what she has to tell Gloucester, and thus she enhances our apprehensions about what is to come (II. 120-31).

The examples I have so far given of Mr. Heilman's methods of interpretation have been limited to words and particular speeches. If we go to the other end of the metaphorical scale and consider the symbolic values attributed to the play as a whole, we will see at work the same arbitrariness in the assignment of symbolic values, the same refusal to consider all the relevant evidence, and the same perverse ingenuity in avoiding the straightforward and direct.

In his preliminary discussion of the tragic structure of *King Lear*, Mr. Heilman writes as follows:

In the latter part of the play Lear is reunited with Cordelia, and Gloucester with Edgar, just as in Act I the old men were enjoying close pseudo intimacies, respectively, with Goneril and Regan and with Edmund. It is, I think, not pushing the evidence too far to say that from the plot alone we may conclude that the change in associates has symbolic value. The reunion with the better children takes place after Lear and Gloucester have undergone a great deal of enlightenment; it may be read, then, as a kind of sign that there has taken place the achievement or recovery of insight which marks the experience of the tragic protagonists, just as their banishing of these children showed their fathers at their most obtuse. Thus Edgar and Cordelia

⁶ See W. J. Lawrence, "Light and darkness in the Elizabethan theatre," *Englische Studien*, XLV (1912), 181-200, and *Pre-Restoration stage studies* (Cambridge, Mass., 1927), pp. 128-30; T. S. Graves, "Night scenes in the Elizabethan theatre," *Englische Studien*, XLVII (1914), 63-71; Chambers, *Elizabethan stage* (1923), II, 543.

symbolize a side of each of their parents, that side in which there lies the potentiality of salvation. But Edgar combats Edmund; Cordelia is on the opposite side from the sisters—those who once had parental confidence. By now the implication must be quite unmistakable: the children, like the Good and Evil Angels in Marlowe's *Faustus*, represent the different elements which are in conflict in the fathers. This is not true in a closely restrictive allegorical fashion, as we shall see; but it contains enough truth to indicate, together with what has already been said about the symbolic relationship between Lear and Gloucester, the essential tightness of structure of a play which has in it an unusual number of actions and characters. We see good and evil in conflict in the world, but by the structure we are reminded that the conflict is an emanation of that in the individual soul. Lear must recognize evil, must resolve his conflict—a conflict externalized in his attitudes to Goneril and Regan and Cordelia. By the fact of relationship the outer and inner evil become one, the two struggles are united. The children are not children for nothing; to be the father of Goneril is to create a symbol of the evil brought forth from oneself. The discerning reader of the play will hardly feel that he has done all his duty by hating Goneril [pp. 33-34; Heilman's italics].

This is a notable, but by no means uncharacteristic, example of Mr. Heilman's open-field running. First, we have a simple *post hoc ergo propter hoc*: since the reunions take place after Lear and Gloucester have undergone enlightenment, they are signs of the enlightenment (after, not because; for Lear's reunion with Cordelia is in no way the effect of his discoveries about his daughters but is brought about by the actions of Gloucester, before he is enlightened, and of Kent and Cordelia, who are enlightened throughout; and Gloucester's reunion with Edgar is the effect not of Gloucester's discovery but of Edgar's late decision to reveal himself to his father). That fallacy is enough to negate what follows, but in the interest of familiarizing ourselves with our critic's technique we may go on. We have next an interesting but illicit substitution of terms: "enlightenment," which the innocent reader is likely to take as a somewhat hyperbolic reference to Lear's discovery about his daughters, becomes first "achievement or recovery of in-

sight," which still seems harmless enough, and then "salvation." Where did salvation come from? To most people—and, as we later learn, to Mr. Heilman—salvation means much more than "enlightenment"; it suggests a religious context to which the familiar meanings of "enlightenment" are inappropriate. We hear no more of salvation at the moment, but, as I have said, it is a key term in Mr. Heilman's exegesis of *King Lear* as a drama of intellectual conquest, and it is instructive to note how it makes its way into his analysis. But why, to go on, should Edgar and Cordelia, because they are reunited with their fathers after the latter have recovered their capacities for insight, symbolize anything? Obviously, because they are in a work in which everything is metaphorical; it will not do for them merely to take their part in the action. But why, if they must be symbols, should their symbolic value be established only at so late a stage in the play, within a few scenes of the end? What good is a crucial symbol if the author keeps it a secret, like the writer of a mediocre detective story? Shakespeare was clearly a novice, at least with symbols. But assuming, as Mr. Heilman has no warrant to ask us to do, that we must read the play once to get the symbols fixed in our minds and at least once more to understand it, why should Edgar and Cordelia symbolize one side of their fathers' personalities? Mr. Heilman gives us the reason, on page 31, in the course of his discussion of the tragic form: in the best tragedies the outer conflict is "symbolic of the movement of universal issues and is at the same time an objectification of the war within the protagonist" (cf. pp. 36-37). Now *King Lear* is one of the best tragedies; ergo, Edgar and Cordelia, who are part of the "outer" conflict, must symbolize an aspect of the "inner" conflict in the fathers. What is important here is not the obvious circularity of Mr. Heilman's reasoning but the derivation of symbolic connections, not from the text of Shakespeare's play, but from the critic's private theory of tragedy, which he asserts but never argues.

We are now in a position to grasp the curious logic by which Edmund, Goneril, and Regan come to symbolize the other side of

their fathers' rather simple world. Edmund and Goneril and Regan are in conflict with Edgar and Cordelia; but, if one side of an outer conflict symbolizes the inner, so does the other; *ergo*. . . But Goneril is also in conflict with Regan—indeed, she kills her, which seems a far more intense form of conflict than any action of Edmund toward Edgar. Why, then, doesn't the conflict between them symbolize some refinement or qualification of the trait in the father which they symbolize together? Perhaps to ask for such an obvious extension of the symbolism would lead to the "closely restrictive" allegorism of which Mr. Heilman says the play is innocent. But other questions are relevant. The conflict between Edmund and Edgar is obviously of a very different order from that between Goneril and Regan and Cordelia; what is the discerning reader, who gets as far as Mr. Heilman takes him, to make of this difference? Does it not, he is likely to ask, affect the symbolic value of Edmund or Goneril and Regan? Evidently not; but why would a careful workman, anxious to avoid the abstractionism of allegory, rely on so vague and abstract a relationship as mere "opposition" for the identification of his symbols? Again we must go back to Professor Heilman's views about tragedy, as we must for an answer to the question of why there are only *two* elements in conflict in Lear and Gloucester. Why not three? Because, simply, good and evil are in conflict in tragedy; but it is Professor Heilman, not Shakespeare, who makes this simple reduction of what is, in fact, a very complex organization of relationships in the play, whose moral implications are never so flatly represented.

Occasionally, Professor Heilman attempts to justify his symbolic readings by showing their superiority over other readings, but his technique here is no less arbitrary than that which he employs in making the symbolic connections themselves. He is perfectly well aware that his readings are unusual; there are always immediate interpretations for a word or a speech other than the one he wishes us to accept. Though he feels obliged, naturally enough, to take account of these alternatives, the reading which Mr. Heilman asks us to re-

ject in favor of his own is always unlikely or absurd, and, doubtless because of this, he never attaches the name of a critic to the rejected reading but proffers it anonymously. A simple instance of this technique is in his remark that Lear's kneeling to Cordelia in Act V, scene 3, is so different from his mock kneeling to Goneril in Act II, scene 4, that "it has a reassuring rather than a horrifying quality" (p. 142). Again, Lear's madness is not "an isolated fact" but the center of a pattern of meanings (p. 174); the "simplest meaning" of Lear's request for an ounce of civet is that he wants to take away an evil smell, but "beneath the semantic surface" the significance is that once Lear had too sweet an imagination but now he has discovered unsweetness and stench (p. 205); Lear's final speeches in Act IV, scene 6, "instead of being a rant," are related to the play structurally by being held within the sight pattern (p. 208); in explaining the sources of the early errors of Lear and Gloucester, "the easiest way out" is to say that they merely make mistakes in identity, but the hardest way out is to follow Professor Heilman (p. 33).⁷

We are repeatedly asked to shun a reading that is obvious, foolish, superficial, self-contradictory, or merely irrelevant and to accept Professor Heilman's symbolism as the true alternative. Why? There are many more readings than he presents to us, and many of them make a kind of sense superior to that of the sophomore responsible for Mr. Heilman's rejected interpretations. Obviously, the critic cannot be expected to give a variorum of critical opinion, but it would have reassured the reader and strengthened our critic's case if he had cited the best of these and argued the superiority of his own interpretation. As it is, Professor Heilman has an easy victory, but probably not over anyone familiar with the play.

Professor Heilman's errors in interpretation are thus the inevitable consequences of his theory. He begins with a determinate structural scheme which, since the work must express meanings, must be embodied in the work if it

⁷ Cf. also pp. 11, 45, 50, 73, 74, 104, 105, 134-35, 156-57, 160, 173, 198, 214, 220, 235, 265.

is to have artistic value. He knows, in all important respects, what he is going to find out before he begins, and it is no wonder that, having begged all the important questions, he should find it. His interpretation is, moreover, in the proper sense, materialistic: form and structure are for him derivative from, and therefore strictly dependent on, the matter which the work expresses; the form of the play, indeed, is its total meaning, and this is obviously not the characters, or their actions, or their thoughts, or even the language in which their thoughts are cast, but what these all represent. Were this not the case, Professor Heilman's project would be meaningless; for these "more obvious" elements of the play, as he again and again points out, have been understood for a long time, while its "form" has not until now been apprehended. His theory, furthermore, is essentially a system of very simple dichotomies, which he attributes to the play itself.⁸ And "meanings" are elaborated from a private and nonartistic theory of morality and religion, and then the necessary symbolic counterparts for the terms of the theory are "discovered" in the play.

A single example of this last influence of his theory upon his analysis of the play must suffice. In his final chapter Mr. Heilman tells us that *King Lear*, in addition to representing an eternal human problem, has also a historical relevance:

At an extraordinarily early time Shakespeare got hold of the modern problem, got hold of it when the Renaissance had, so to speak, barely started it on its way. Lear, in one sense, represents the old order, and the play becomes the tragedy of that order [pp. 278-79].

In what sense is it significant to speak of "the" modern problem? Who says, and on what evidence, that there is but one or one more important than the rest? How do we know, if there is such a thing, that it is a modern problem only? Or, as some of Mr. Heilman's later remarks suggest, is it a problem that recurs in cyclical succession? What, in any case, is the evidence that this "problem" is the conflict between old and new orders rather than, say, between a

search for security and a search for freedom common to all orders? Professor Heilman goes on to say:

Given this clash of forces whose ramifications extend deep into the nature of man (Goneril, the representative of the new order, is of the flesh and blood of Lear, the representative of the old), Shakespeare outlines, in intense dramatic compactness, the overwhelming problems which beset both the individual and the age at the historical crisis [p. 280].

The children, indeed, are not children for nothing! It is in a way futile to ask why Goneril should symbolize the new order rather than Albany and Edgar, who are just as young, so far as we know, who identify themselves as the new generation (Act V, scene 3, ll. 325-26), and who survive—one to become king—and who might therefore be thought of as the "new" order. The reason, of course, is that Professor Heilman believes all this nonsense about "the modern problem" and "the historical crisis" and knows what has to happen. Poor Bradley has been accused by modern critics of monumental crimes, chief among them being a habit of giving a psychological background for the characters in terms of his own, or his period's, conception of morality. The amplitude, privacy, and irrelevance of the moral, political, and religious theories by which Mr. Heilman supports—nay, determines—his reading of *King Lear* make his distinguished predecessor seem like a beginner.

If Professor Heilman's theory of the drama as metaphor forces him into arbitrary and hence often capricious interpretations of its symbolism, his conception of the function of imagery results in a construction that resembles a great play much less than it does an inferior philosophic dialogue. The critic lays it down that "in Shakespeare's language recurrence is an objective fact, not a figment of critics' enthusiasm" (p. 8), and everyone will probably agree. A word in a play, he continues, has "two kinds of meaningful relationship," explicit denotations, on the one hand, and, on the other, "latent meanings or dormant powers of suggestion that under certain circumstances may palpably modify or amplify the express meaning of the syntactical unit." *Hat*, to take

⁸ Cf., e.g., pp. 28, 58, 91-92, 115-16, 127-28, 135, 178-79, 185, 222, 230, 277, and esp. 284-85.

his example, may refer to a man's headdress, or it "may contain, in unresolved form, the ideas, say, of formality or decency or protectedness" (p. 9). These implicative or suggestive powers are aroused when a word is repeated:

A recurrent word, as I have said, is found to exist in a dual relationship: one of its links is to the thing denoted, the other to the sum total of uses of the word. All these uses constitute a community which by its very existence calls our attention to it and which, once we are aware of it, sets up imaginative vibrations and thus imparts to us meanings beyond the level of explicitness. Repetition itself is a mode of meaning [p. 9].

In brief, "it is the recurrency of *hat* which calls *hatness* into the play, and *hatness* then is seen to have some thematic import in the work as a whole" (*ibid.*). Now, although Mr. Heilman goes on to say that the symbolic value of the word (e.g., the reference of *hatness* to *formality* or *decency* rather than, say, to *roguishness* or *avarice*) is "fairly likely" to be given an unequivocal statement at some time or other in the play and although, as I have said, he later speaks of such elements as character and action as providing the "most obvious" means of recognizing the recurrent patterns of imagery, these are not categorical requirements, and they sound very much like useful, but by no means essential, props for the less discerning.

It is evident that Professor Heilman has not thought through, or has not given an adequate statement of, the mode of relationship between the patterns of poetic imagery and other elements of the play. If *hatness* in a given play means *formality*, how do we know this? The latent meanings and suggestive powers of a word are infinite apart from the play and, by Professor Heilman's definition, not limited by the context in which they appear; unless interpretation is merely to display the linguistic virtuosity of the critic, some basis must be found on which the potentialities of signification in words can be realized in particular meanings appropriate to the play. It is fantastic to assert that the repetition of basic words "opens the consciousness to all the expressive possibilities of these words" (p. 18); for repetition could do this no more readily

than could single occurrence, and, if it did, the play could obviously make no unified impression at all. What repetition, artistically handled, does is to open those possibilities, and those only, that are relevant to the play. But, clearly, Mr. Heilman is speaking loosely here; for he adds that the "resources" of the symbol are tapped differently according to "different contextual demands." And this is precisely the point; for it must be to the context, immediate or more remote, that the imagery is referred, and this necessity establishes the priority, both in the structure of the play and in critical analysis, of the primary determinants of the context—character, situation, antecedent action, intention, and the like, as all these are involved in the plot. If *hat* is to signify *formality* or a cognate concept throughout the play and if the play's effect is to be determined by the writer and not by the whim of the critic, then the connection between the two terms must be established in a metaphor or image in a context in which *formality* is clearly set forth as a basic term in the thought of a character, or in his mental or psychological makeup, or in the circumstances in which he acts, or in the standards of value employed by one or more of the characters, or in some similar manner. And I should think that this connection would have to be established early in the play if a pattern in any genuine sense is to be formed; for, in the absence of an explicit designation of the symbolic value of a word, no amount of repetition can produce anything except vagueness. Only when such a connection has been unequivocally established and when the symbol recurs in the same kind of context are we licensed to invoke "imaginatively" the earlier metaphorical attachment of *hat* to *formality*.

All this means, of course, that the verbal patterns are strictly relative to, and dependent for their value upon, those "larger and more conspicuous elements" of the drama of which Professor Heilman takes so cavalier a view; and it means, further, that these verbal patterns cannot be the primary elements in the play's structure, as Professor Heilman's procedure implies; for what is essentially derivative cannot provide the unifying principle for that from which it is derived. No one would

suppose that the proper significance could be assigned to the thoughts expressed by the characters in a play except in relation to the characters expressing them and the circumstances and ends in relation to which they are expressed; a fortiori, therefore, the imagery, which is but one aspect of the expression of the thought, cannot be properly evaluated except in terms of a prior and controlling consideration of the thought, character, circumstances, etc. Professor Heilman's constantly reverses this order. For him the meanings that he finds expressed in the recurrent imagery are broader and more fundamental than those expressed in the action of *King Lear*; character and action are relative to the patterns, and their meanings exist for them. This inversion of the proper artistic relationships among the elements of the play can be seen in his assertion that from the plot of the play we can discern only "partial outlines" of its form, which must be "amplified and corrected" by the evidence of the symbolic language (p. 32), and in his contention that only the skeleton of the play can be derived from the plot, the flesh and blood from the poetic-dramatic patterns (p. 38; cf. also p. 25), but his whole analysis involves standing the play on its head.

The necessary consequence of this separation of the imagery from its proper artistic relation to the more important elements in the drama can be seen when Mr. Heilman comes to decide upon the order in which to consider the poetic patterns. By denying the relativity of the imagery, in any essential way, to character or action, Professor Heilman has deprived himself of one principle of order among his patterns—the artistic order provided by the plot of *King Lear*. In place of this he has substituted an abstract order based on the implications which he discerns among the patterns. This we see when, in the "Critical preliminaries," he tells us that his sequence of discussion is that "into which the different problems of meaning seem naturally to fall" (p. 27) and adds that the sight pattern is a "quite logical" place from which to work toward the "heart" of the drama because its chief figure is Gloucester, who is in a secondary tragic role. On artistic grounds it would seem that Gloucester's

secondary role was the best possible reason for *not* starting with a pattern of imagery focused chiefly on him, but rather with the primary tragic figure in relation to whom his secondary function in the play is defined. But Professor Heilman's order of procedure is not artistic but dialectical—from the outside in, from the secondary to the essential, from the surface to the heart—and the discussion is controlled by an extrinsic criterion, the "natural" order among the problems dealt with in the play. Thus he tells us that the sight pattern "prepares us for the study of evil that finds its main treatment in the madness pattern" (p. 51). Prepares us in what sense? Clearly not in the sense that the speeches of Goneril and Regan at the end of Act I, scene 1, prepare us for their later actions toward Lear, by forming our expectations through a statement of the ends for which they act and of the principles and physical means at their disposal; for the sight and madness patterns, developing simultaneously, have no proper temporal relation, and whatever expectations the imagery arouses cannot be in terms of character or action. The sight pattern prepares for the madness pattern through logical implication—what the sight pattern asserts, we are told, is that "to have eyes, and to see not, is to be at the mercy of evil, and thus to aid evil. Not to see is not to understand" (p. 51); and, since the madness pattern is concerned directly with the problem of understanding, the connection between the two is evident.⁹ The connection is similar to that by which one level of discussion in a Platonic dialogue prepares for that above it, by formulating a paradoxical statement or question for

⁹ By similar expansion of the philosophic context we move from the nature pattern as it defines man to the nature pattern as it defines nature: "This is what the patterns say about the nature of man. But man belongs to a universe; there are principles which operate both within him and outside him. From the nature of man it is a necessary step to the nature of nature" (p. 112). Here we may ask why it is—assuming that we must proceed in the order given by the dialectical relations among the problems with which the play is said to deal—that this particular order is the necessary one; why, that is to say, must we go from man to the universe rather than from the universe to man, from the area of the more particular principles to that of the more general, rather than the reverse? This is obviously a philosophic rather than an artistic question, unanswerable from the evidence of Shakespeare's play, since it presents its

resolution on the basis of truer or more general principles. This movement back and forth, or up and down, between the various levels of significance in the play is the chief source of the countless paradoxes that Professor Heilman finds in *King Lear*; their presence should surprise no one; for, given the assumptions that the critic makes about the kind of work it is, it is impossible that "paradoxes" of this kind should not be there.

As a final example of Professor Heilman's dialectical manipulation of the problems with which he symbolically connects the play, we may consider the following, in which I have italicized the critic's intrusions:

The problem of the natural, we have seen, is elaborated by means of the imagery of injury and disease. *A comparable symbol of the vulnerability of human nature is age, and of age there is significant awareness throughout the play.* Further, the constant thinking in terms of what is natural and of the violation of the natural *would suggest, we might expect,* the subject of justice; and, as a matter of fact, the subject is a recurrent one in *King Lear*. Finally . . . in a world in which standards of justice differ and in which we must find methods of discrimination, *it is but a step* to the problem of values. *Through the problem of values we shall approach* what we have already said is the basic theme of the play—the problem of understanding [p. 134; cf. also pp. 64, 87, 133, 255].

Professor Heilman's conception of the primacy of poetic imagery in the structure of the play leads necessarily to a view of *King Lear* as a logical or, better, a dialectical structure. The ultimate rationale of the parts is in their common bearing on a linked set of philosophic problems, the full significance of which the play, through its imagery primarily, progressively explores. The order of exploration and of understanding is a movement from the outer appearance to the inner reality, from the relatively simple to the more complex, from the particular to the universal, from the many to the one, in a sequence of levels of discussion in which what appears as complexities and para-

meanings—if it does so at all—concurrently and by "interanimation"; the philosophy which makes this order necessary is Professor Heilman's, not Shakespeare's, and he makes no effort to demonstrate its superior relevance.

doxes at one level is transformed, at the level next above, into a new paradox, embracing a larger area of meaning and approaching nearer to truth, until at last all the dialectical oppositions of the (logically) preceding levels are given a final translation in the apprehension of transcendental truth.¹⁰ Whatever the philosophic merits of this procedure, it is not artistic in any distinguishable sense of that word; for it is a method of universal application, potential alike to the discovery of philosophic truth, the interpretation of dreams, the disclosure of religious mysteries, and, if one chooses, the implication of meanings by "plays."¹¹ Professor

¹⁰ *King Lear* becomes, because of the logical rather than the temporal order of its principal parts, a static rather than a dynamic whole. Although the total meaning of the play is in process of complete formulation throughout the action of the play, it is the whole play considered as a complex metaphor which is the proper analogue of this meaning, and its parts are significant not so much in terms of how they are prepared for and how they, in turn, prepare for a later part as in terms of the symbolic relationships in which they participate, these symbolic relationships being as often to what has gone before as to what comes after. The play is a whole, therefore, more like a statue or a painting than like a drama in the usual sense: the critic can regard everything in it as existing and functioning simultaneously, without regard to its position in the temporal sequence. Thus, to take one example out of many, Mr. Heilman says, in discussing the sexual imagery used to characterize Goneril, Regan, and Edmund, most of which is drawn from the fourth and fifth acts: "This characterization of the sisters by the sex theme is aided by at least one careful contrast of them with Cordelia. Asking her father to make clear the cause of her disgrace, Cordelia insists that

It is no vicious blot, murder or foulness,

No unchaste action, or dishonour'd step . . .

(I, 1, 230-31).

Without the thematic context, *unchaste* might be merely part of a general catalogue; as it is, the word helps underline the sisters' animality" (p. 102; Heilman's italics). When Cordelia makes this speech, there is no context, sexual or otherwise; it is only through the kind of cross-reference permitted by a static conception of the play that Mr. Heilman's "aiding" and "underlining" become possible.

¹¹ The applicability of the method, without essential change, to works "superficially" quite different, as well as the inner similarity which such different works come to have when exposed to treatment under Mr. Heilman's assumptions, can be observed by comparing his reading of *King Lear* with his reading of Henry James's *Turn of the screw* (see "The turn of the screw as poem" [the title reveals the reductive tendency of the method], *University of Kansas City review*, summer, 1948, pp. 277-89; also in *Forms of modern fiction*, ed. William Van O'Connor [Minneapolis, 1948], pp. 211-28).

Heilman reduces—or elevates, depending on one's preferences in art and philosophy—*King Lear* to an epistemological discourse in dialogue form. And this invites us to look at the epistemology.

The battles for physical and moral survival in *King Lear*, according to Professor Heilman, are interpenetrated by "philosophic or quasi-philosophic struggles" (p. 281), and the problems about which these struggles revolve constitute an "amazingly inclusive anthropology" (p. 177). The play asks such questions as: What is man's nature? What is nature? (p. 26). What is reason? What is folly? What is wisdom? In what way of thinking about experience is man's salvation? (p. 27). The play poses and suggests, if complexly, answers to the problems of seeing, of the uses and limits of rationalism, of innocence, of appearance and reality, of values, of the definition of "man's essential humanity," of the kinds of mental balance, of man's mode of understanding experience, of distributive justice, of man, and of The World. And, as we have seen, to the consideration of these eternal questions is joined Shakespeare's attack on "the modern problem."

From a play which "constantly labors" so many basic questions, which is "speculatively very active" in the realm of metaphysics, which "explores" such transcendental issues and aims at definitions of principles so fundamental,¹² we might expect, if the play deserves the reputation which three centuries of reading have brought it, answers, or at least adumbrations of answers, of some intellectual distinction. But if we expect this we shall be disappointed. The philosophic yield from *King Lear* is pitifully meager—a poor thing by comparison, say, with that from the *Novum organum* or the *Laws of ecclesiastical polity*. Mr. Heilman's Shakespeare, it may be, labors, but he brings forth little more than platitudes. When the wonderful imagery of *King Lear* has been reduced to sense, and the doctrines of the play, disrobed of their ornaments, are left to the powers of their naked excellence, what shall we discover? That man, though he is liable to damnation, may yet achieve salvation

(p. 91); that man is wholly evil when reason and animality work together (p. 105); and that there is, despite the horrifying chaos of phenomena, a substantial universal order upon which men may rely (p. 151). We may learn yet more—that man is a rational animal (pp. 98–100) and that man's weakness puts him in need of persuasion and that he is therefore subject to influence (p. 241). To these profound principles of natural knowledge are added some moral instructions equally new—that rational man is in danger of rationalizing essential values out of existence (p. 177); that real insight is apparently doomed to ill success in the world (p. 249); and that, while men may pray for justice because the gods will execute it, they cannot dictate the terms on which their prayers will be answered (pp. 255, 268). Surely a man of no very comprehensive search may venture to say that he has heard all this before. That these principles are profound and important no one is likely to question—so is the Golden Rule; but that the assertion of them, even through the details of a particular case, is likely to be powerfully moving, as the play has always been felt to be, is manifestly improbable. The grand irony of Professor Heilman's interpretation of *King Lear* is that the more closely he approaches the play's total meaning—the more successful he is in suggesting the One which interpenetrates the Many—the more trivial the play becomes. As drama it is superb, original, inimitable; as philosophy—or even as "quasi-philosophy"—it is commonplace and undistinguished, amply justifying Shaw's protest against the "pretentious reduction of the subtlest problems of life to commonplaces, against which a Polytechnic debating club would revolt," and against platitudes "that even an American professor of ethics would blush to offer to his disciples."

So bald a restatement of some of the meanings of his *King Lear* may seem unfair to Professor Heilman's analysis, if not to the play; for he points out on several occasions that the play does not assert or demonstrate its meanings as would a philosophic treatise: they are adumbrated or implied, usually in a paradoxical fusion of what normally appear to be incompatible areas of experience, so that what

¹² See, e.g., pp. 28, 68, 92, 105, 133, 156, 284–85.

we have in the play is not didacticism or philosophy but embodiment and implication.¹³ But a paradox is a mode of assertion; implications must be made explicit if we are not to surrender ourselves and the play to critical caprice. Despite his repeated emphasis on the method of paradox, Professor Heilman emphatically denies that in *King Lear* Shakespeare is "resting in a detached presentation of the ambiguities of experience" (p. 189; cf. pp. 69, 91). Indeed, the mode of connection which we have observed Professor Heilman to be establishing among the image patterns of the play is necessitated by the need to resolve, in the interests of a positive and not merely ambiguous significance, the paradoxes of each subordinate pattern of imagery in a supervening implication at a higher level. Thus the ironies of the good man's fate in the world suggested by the clothes and sight patterns are resolved in the nature pattern's implication of a higher realm in which the very qualities responsible for misfortune in the world become the conditions of salvation. And all the paradoxes of the play are resolved in the implications of the religion pattern, which suggests that the perception of eternal truth is the sanity of the mad, the dress of the naked, the sight of the blind, and the eternal life of the old (pp. 252-53, 255, 284-87).

Professor Heilman, evidently sensitive to the elementary quality of the meanings of *King Lear* when they are stated as such, attempts to save them from dismissal and to redeem the play by telling us that the meanings are "complexly," not simply, asserted. His chief instrument in this endeavor is the paradox, which avoids the obvious and encompasses the radically dissimilar; but he has more direct ways of arguing the "inordinately complex world," the "vast implications" that the play figures forth. What Professor Heilman means by a "complex" as distinct from a "simple" view of things may be illustrated in his treatment of Lear's anguished comment on his evil daughters (Act IV, scene 6, ll. 126-29):

Down from the waist they are Centaurs
Though women all above;

But to the girdle do the gods inherit,
Beneath is all the fiend's.

The "complexity" of the attitude underlying these lines Professor Heilman indicates as follows:

Man is equally capable of salvation or damnation. The Centaur is exactly the right image here, for it admits the possibility of high intellectual and spiritual attainment yet connotes primarily the proneness to violence and disorder which the play exhibits throughout. It exhibits man as a rational animal [p. 100].

Man, that is to say, is not entirely angelic or entirely bestial, but both! Again, in commenting on the treatment of the problem of justice, he says:

Indeed, not only Lear, but other characters, think repeatedly of justice; some ignore the subject entirely, but those who are conscious of it never lose faith that justice is being done or will at some time be done. Yet justice is treated complexly; human beings are not just at all times; and injustice is a fact, a fact which Shakespeare obviously treats with great fullness [p. 145].¹⁴

Complexity, it would appear, is a negative virtue—it really amounts only to the avoidance of the simple-minded; if an artist, even a mediocre one, represented man as entirely human or entirely animal, as always just or always unjust, we should be obliged to say that he was a simpleton and his work, if it purported to be serious, absurdly irrelevant to common experience. But is it meaningful to dignify as "complex" the mere avoidance of the ridiculous? If it is, then a host of hacks who are at least familiar with the facts of life are eligible for critical acclaim on the basis of their complexity; but it has been thought for a long time, and rightly, that Shakespeare's principal tragedies were wonderfully complex in some sense which makes them irreducible to the simplest axioms of human conduct.

The chief evidence of the "complexity" of attitude and implication in *King Lear*, however, is to be found in its paradoxes; and here, too, we find evidence of Professor Heilman's simplism, for most of his paradoxes are merely

¹³ See, e.g., pp. 67, 89, 91, 108, 128, 177, 214, 253, 284-85.

¹⁴ Cf. also pp. 91-105, 124, 149, 176, 188, 189, 252, 267.

puns, dependent rather on the ambiguities of words than on any genuine fusion of unlike things. The theory of the paradox was well developed in rhetorical literature in the Renaissance, and its practice extensively cultivated; a paradox in the fullest and most serious sense was taken to be a statement contrary to common opinion, yet true, such as Donne's assertion that "Nature is our worst Guide"; formally, it often, but by no means always, involved an opposition of contrary terms. The paradoxes of Professor Heilman are rarely of this sort. One of the more important of them is that the blind may see, while those who see may be blind. But the paradox is only apparent: for *blindness* and *seeing* have different meanings on the two sides of both these assertions, and unless the *blindness* is in the organs or to the phenomena of which sight is said in the predicate to be possible, where is the paradox? Who would be surprised, or even illuminated (and wondrous apprehension, as Puttenham's name for the figure surely indicates, is essential to the genuine paradox) by the assertion that blind men can apprehend spiritual truth?—surely no one in a religious, as well as verbally, sophisticated age, however plausible as paradox the pun may now seem. Similarly with the paradoxes that the naked may survive better than the well-protected and that age may endure: the naked in *King Lear* do not survive in terms of their nakedness, and age does not endure in any sense in which it is significant to speak of it as old. What we have in Mr. Heilman's *King Lear*, it would seem, is a body of platitude garbed in a merely verbal "complexity."

Even if it were not true that the "meaning" of *King Lear* becomes, on Mr. Heilman's reading of it, a commonplace repetition of Christian parables, his theory and method have two further disadvantages. On the one hand, his conception of the "problems" of the play subverts its moral basis and consequently undermines its effect—by reducing character to an aspect of thought; and, on the other hand, he makes it impossible to read the play with understanding by converting into ultimate "implications" the ethical and philosophic assumptions on which it rests.

Important and difficult problems are unquestionably raised in *King Lear*—Lear, for example, is forced to deal with the problem posed by the impact of Cordelia's apparently unfilial behavior upon his love for her and his plans for the future; later he must cope with the problem raised by Goneril and Regan's refusal to carry out the terms of his gift of the kingdom to them. The important aspect of these problems for our present purpose is their quality: they are problems of specific characters (and, despite the mirror plot in the play, there are always important differences among the parallel problems of parallel characters); they are specifically defined by the character and his immediate circumstances, ceasing to be problems, or precisely the same problems, when character or circumstances are altered; they are dynamically related not only to character but to one another, the solution or failure of solution of one problem generating a further problem, and so on; they are fundamentally moral rather than intellectual problems—calling for action and involving deliberation and choice in terms of moral ends and ethical principles; and they are all definitively solved in one way or another before the end of the play. This is to say merely that a continuum of concrete moral problems provides the framework for the action of the play. It is not to suggest that intellectual or philosophic questions are not raised or are not important in the action, but it is to say that the relation of such questions—of which Lear's efforts in his madness to get at the nature of justice may serve as an example—to problems of the first sort must be kept clear: the intellectual problems arise from failures to deal satisfactorily with problems of a practical order, and the terms in which these intellectual problems are cast derive their meanings from the ethical context in which antecedent moral problems had been framed; the outcome of the solution of intellectual questions, in *King Lear* at least, is never repose in the abstract solution but a readjustment of character and thought to the circumstances and a renewal of the action on the practical level. In general, efforts of the characters to solve intellectual or philosophic questions function to supply the premises for

action or discovery; but it is always for the sake of the latter that such problems are raised.

It is not in specific moral problems or even in contributory philosophic questions that Professor Heilman finds the "meanings" of his *King Lear*. The problems of his *King Lear* are not so much problems of particular characters as problems of "the play"; once introduced, they remain unchanged, even if they are treated with increasing "complexity," throughout the play; they are related to one another not dynamically, through character, but logically, as we have seen; they are intellectual ("what is nature?" "in what way of thinking about experience is man's salvation?") rather than moral—directed, that is, not to action and happiness but to truth and salvation; and they are not solved before the end of the play but have their solutions metaphorically implied by the play as a whole.

The importance of these differences is in their consequences for the status of character and moral action in *King Lear*. The specific moral problems first mentioned are relative in each case to character: each is the problem of one character only, deriving its alternatives from the interrelation of his ends and moral principles and the possibilities available to him under the circumstances of the moment; the problem can never be understood apart from the character; and its artistic importance is in permitting a display of character (in deliberation, choice, or action) through which an ethical response is evoked and in engaging a character toward whom our feelings have thus been aroused in actions through which his happiness or misery is determined. The kind of problem with which Professor Heilman conceives the play to be fundamentally concerned is not, thus, relative to character; character, rather, is relative to the problems; indeed, character becomes for him merely the attitudes of the persons of the play to the leading problems with which it deals. "In one sense," we are told, "all the experiences of the major characters are a testing of ideas of theirs" (p. 128); and throughout the analysis it is clear that the characters take their places in the "structure" because of what and how they think or perceive—because of their mode of understand-

ing, to use Mr. Heilman's phrase—for the unity of the play is in its meanings, and these, so far as the characters are concerned, are expressed primarily in the attitudes, beliefs, and intellectual habits of the *dramatis personae*. Lear's tragic flaw is therefore intellectual rather than moral—he "endeavors to introduce quantitative norms where the questions are entirely qualitative" (pp. 217-18).¹⁵ The effect of this conception of the play's problems is to dissolve or subvert the moral basis of the drama by making not what the characters are and do so much as what and how they think the cause of their happiness or misery.

But how, even if it were true that a work thus deprived of its moral basis could have the kind of emotional effect that *King Lear* has always been thought to have, could the play as Professor Heilman interprets it be intelligible at any level? For his method necessitates treating the very premises on which the characterization and action of the play depend for their intelligibility as if they were not premises but unsolved problems.

Thus in his discussion of the nature pattern, Mr. Heilman tells us that the term "nature," in "the metaphorical usage of this play," besides signifying a normal ordered functioning of the physical world, "comes also to mean a normal, ordered functioning of the *moral* world, a final principle to which all moral phenomena are to be referred" (p. 119; Heilman's italics). "Comes also to mean" is quite inaccurate, for the conception of nature as moral order is evident from the first two scenes of the play and is obviously presupposed as a criterion for the assessment of Edmund's soliloquy at the opening of Act I, scene 2; Mr. Heilman himself retracts his phrase in going on to say of nature as a moral order that "many characters rely on this principle of order, they understand in terms of it; and they judge phenomena by it, as their language constantly shows." But perhaps this is only an apparent retraction, for Professor Heilman's statements and his entire analysis suggest that in his view such funda-

¹⁵ Cf. p. 171: "There are various ingredients in Lear's tragic flaw, but the most important is his failure to recognize what areas of value are not capable of rational formulation" (cf. also pp. 32-33, 164, 192-93, 225).

mental questions as whether nature is a moral order in the universe are not determined until the end of the play; for Shakespeare, we are told, although "he does not choose sides in any obvious sense," finally implies the side that he is on:

throughout the verbal and dramatic patterns of the play, throughout the structural dualities, there is a consistent and continual intimation: in the cosmos there is a justice (whatever the injustice in fact), there is an order (whatever the chaos in fact), there is an underlying reality (whatever the deceptiveness of appearance); in man there is a sight (whatever the blindness in fact) and an imaginative understanding (whatever the rationalistic obtuseness that may periodically dominate him) by which he may seize upon the realities necessary to his survival. These are the implications of the key words in the play [pp. 286-87; cf. also pp. 325-26].

During the play the issue between these "structural dualities" is undecided, and it is the "tension" between these "contrapuntal oppositions" that gives the play its effect. A choral speech on nature is "not to be taken as dogmatic and final" but becomes "a hypothesis which the drama as a whole may reject or confirm" (p. 108); and concerning the opposition between Edmund's view of nature and that of certain other characters, Mr. Heilman writes:

The question is . . . whether he [Shakespeare] stops with a presentation of the complexities of definition—which is in itself no minor literary [*sic*] task or whether all the evidence of the play has the effect of making, in dramatic form, a judgment upon the problem of conflicting usages [p. 124].

To write thus about the indeterminacy of the key terms in the play is flatly inconsistent with the view that "the play as a whole proceeds on the assumption that nature is a principle of order—a principle subject to violation and apparently conquerable by chaos, and yet ultimately able to assert itself as the order of the whole and to bring into conformity with it that other 'nature' of Edmund's . . ." (p. 127); it is illogical to refer to an "assumption" as a "conflicting usage" upon which judgment is to be passed. Are we to convict Shakespeare of a circularity which will only intensify the low

opinion of his philosophic powers that Mr. Heilman's statement of the play's meanings encourages us to entertain—the assumption of a premise which he then proceeds to "prove"? Or are we not rather to convict Mr. Heilman of reading the play in two quite different ways and of playing both ends against the middle? Surely, his instinct rather than his method is correct: the play as a whole presupposes, it asserts as a premise, it takes for granted, it includes among its *données*, that there is a justice, an order, an underlying reality, etc.; and the play as a whole "implies" these things, if it does so at all, only because they have already been built into the play as the basis of its probabilities, the ground for judgments of character, the conditions of immediate and over-all expectancy, and the terms for the statement of its particular moral problems. The reader knows from the outset, and does not have to wait for the ultimate dissolution of a system of dichotomies to learn, that the view of nature put forward by Edmund is, in all essential respects, wrong; that Gloucester, in the premises which he uses to judge Edgar, is correct; that Goneril and Regan's "case" against Lear's retainers is false. We know, in general, the fundamental answers to all Mr. Heilman's problems as soon as they become problems for the characters. For Shakespeare, unlike a good many modern novelists and unlike many dramatists of his own time, such as Beaumont and Fletcher, is an ironist in the proper sense—he supplies the audience with the premises and information withheld from, or wrongly interpreted by, the character, in order that we may understand them, make judgments about them that will permit us to be emotionally affected by what happens to them, see their actions and sufferings as probable consequences of their knowledge and intentions, and—however surprised we may be at the turns of the action—recognize the inevitability of each and of the eventual outcome.

Professor Heilman confuses "implication" and "presupposition," and he fails to distinguish between the problems of certain of the characters (e.g., Lear's uncertainty about nature as a moral order) and the problems of the play and its readers. If the solutions or implica-

tions of Mr. Heilman's problems emerge only when the play is complete, then there is no real basis for understanding it or for being affected by it; if, on the other hand, premises necessary to the intelligibility of the play are indeed provided, most or all of Mr. Heilman's problems disappear.

Even if it were not true, however, that *King Lear* is strictly unintelligible on Professor Heilman's assumptions, the effect of the play suggested by his interpretation is one which no one has ever attributed to *King Lear*, which is, moreover, inappropriate to tragedy, and which, finally, Shakespeare's text does not support. On the whole, Mr. Heilman has very little to say about the way in which *Lear* affects the spectator and reader; and, while we may grant that the critic's main effort should be concentrated on the details of the text, this effort is likely to be undirected or misdirected unless it is controlled by a hypothesis—progressively confirmed or altered and, in any case, refined, as the analysis proceeds—concerning the precise quality of the power that the work exercises. Although Mr. Heilman acknowledges in his "Critical preliminaries" a certain obligation to Aristotle, he finds no use for Aristotle's insistence that pity and fear are the emotions proper to tragedy and that from them as ends the specific properties of the form may be inferred. When Professor Heilman mentions pity it is usually reduced to pathos (or "mere pathos"), and his intention is to show the inadequacy of the emotions suggested by this word to *King Lear*, as in his judgment of the initial mistakes of Lear and Gloucester:

These errors may be fatal or merely pathetic; but we are not invited merely to condemn or to sympathize. Instead we are compelled to enter fully into perceptual experiences of distracting difficulty and hence to feel—if not to follow out to metaphysical conclusions—oppressive problems of personal identity [pp. 68–69].

Fear, so far as I am aware, he does not mention at all, not even to deny its relevance.¹⁶ Al-

¹⁶ It is noteworthy, therefore, that Professor Heilman has little to say about speeches and scenes in which impending action potentially dangerous or hopeful for Lear is deliberated, narrated, or enacted—such as Kent's speech at Act III, scene 1, ll. 17–55, and all of Act III, scenes 3 and 5; Act IV, scenes 3, 5, and 7; and Act V, scene 1. These, we may suppose,

though there are vague references to the force and power of the play as a whole and of certain of its scenes, nowhere are the specific emotional effects of the force and power made clear; when Professor Heilman mentions an emotion it is always to deny that it is appropriate to the "inner reality" of the play.

We are not invited to condemn or sympathize; we are not to be horrified or cynical or sentimental. What state are we to be in? The answer should be apparent in the light of what has so far been said. We are to be enlightened, shown, convinced, or illuminated—we are to undergo, in short, the intellectual effect proper to one who perceives, after great difficulty, the One gleaming through the Many. Thus, in the passage just quoted, Mr. Heilman tells us that, instead of pity or antipathy, we are to feel "oppressive problems" of personal identity because we have entered into difficult "perceptual experiences"; later, denying that pathos alone, which is "too easy," could account for the powerful impression made by the scenes of Lear's madness, he insists that "beneath the superficial aspects of these scenes [those that is, which make them shocking, terrible, and pathetic], there must be felt, by even a casual student, a reverberation of underlying meanings which constitute the inner reality of the scenes" (p. 173); and still later he points out that the play is bent, not upon giving final answers to the problems it raises, but "upon evoking a sense of their magnitude and of the well-nigh intolerable burden which they place upon the human mind" (pp. 177–78).

That the principal effect of the play must be some mode of intellectual activity, accompanied by appropriate but vague emotional overtones, could have been inferred from Professor Heilman's early discussion of tragedy (pp. 30–32). Tragedy is not concerned, he tells us there, with "evil fortune that may lead to cynicism and despair" (p. 31). We gladly as-

are more properly parts of the play's superficial aspect than of its inner reality, but that Shakespeare chose to present them, often at considerable length, encourages the supposition that they have some importance in the play as he wrote it. The evocation of fear by setting in motion or continuing contrary lines of development seems a reasonable hypothesis for their presence.

sent and look forward to a statement of the kind of emotion, if it is not cynicism and despair, that the evil fortune of tragedy does lead to, but we are rewarded with a different line altogether:

Tragedy is concerned, not with evil fortune that may lead to cynicism and despair, but with evil that is understandable in terms of human character; a literary work that tells of destructive mischances may have its own excellence and validity, but its cosmos is a quite different one from that of tragedy. Tragedy records, eventually, victory rather than defeat; it asserts the authority of the spiritual scheme of things to which man, because of his flaw, does violence; and it presents man as understanding his deviation, undergoing a spiritual rehabilitation, recovering the insights by which he may endure. The suffering in tragedy is not an end, but a product and a means; through it comes wisdom, and, if not redemption, at least a renewed grasp upon the laws of redemption. The Eumenides exist only because man's soul is not corrupt [pp. 31-32].

"Understandable in terms of human character" replaces the designation of an emotion alternative to cynicism and despair, and we learn that the tragic protagonist has fundamentally intellectual ends, that his tragic error is intellectual, and that he is finally victorious. A tragedy, it would appear, traces the progress of a good man with an intellectual flaw from bad fortune to good (recovery of insights by which he may endure; redemption or renewed grasp upon the laws of redemption)—in other words, from rationalistic rags to imaginative riches. Since the "action" of the play is the paradoxical statement and enacted solution of philosophic problems arising from intellectual error and standing in the way of redemption or salvation and since redemption or salvation is a recovery of true insight, it obviously follows that the audience is to undergo an intellectual experience which parallels the spiritual progress of the protagonist (cf. p. 213).

If the play, in these terms, can have any emotional effect, it can be only a kind of awe (at the magnitude of the problems to be solved) combined with attenuated pity (because the sufferings of the protagonist are seen to be the necessary means to salvation), giving place to joy in the reversal (when insights are

recovered and salvation achieved). It is not accidental that Professor Heilman refers on several occasions to the similarities between his *King Lear* and *The divine comedy*, for the latter, though, as Dante said, quite opposite to tragedy, is precisely this kind of work. *King Lear*, so far as I am aware, has not been generally regarded, even by the more perceptive, as a joyful work; yet in the terms in which Professor Heilman describes it I do not see how it can be anything else. The whole tendency of his analysis—with its emphasis on salvation as the goal of Lear's actions, with its Christian "transvaluation" of a pagan world, with its placement of the climax of the play in Lear's reachivement of insight, with its treatment of the reversal as a passage from bad fortune to good—all this and much more makes it clear that Lear is a man who, after much suffering, which is expiatory and therefore in the proper sense deserved, achieves what he had all along been in search of, the vision in which is eternal life. That Lear dies, that he loses Cordelia at the moment of their reunion—these are incidental, parts of the play's superficial aspect, not of its inner reality, and serving at most to underscore paradoxically the magnitude of Lear's victory; for he that loseth his life shall find it. Only a person incapable, as Mr. Heilman says, of distinguishing between quality and quantity of life could feel anything but spiritual exaltation at Lear's triumph over himself and the world.

This interpretation is certainly original; for it has not been common among critics of *King Lear* to state its primary effect in terms of salvation or spiritual triumph and the emotional consequences of these. But Mr. Heilman's interpretation is not merely original, it is preposterous. It violates the unmistakable signs of the play's effect which appear in the text, and it is founded upon a radical confusion of the feelings which a sensitive and inquiring reader might have after the play is over with those he has during the action itself. That Lear recovers or achieves penetrating insights into himself and the world is a commonplace of critical discussion of this play, as is the observation that the action suggests—or more properly, presupposes—a morally ordered universe. But do the concrete language and action of

King Lear, the particular details of its development as a drama, contain clear signs that Lear's career to the end of the play is to be thought of as having such insights and the affirmation of such a universe as its goal? Are we regularly reminded—indeed, are we reminded at all—that Lear's recovery of an imaginative synthesis, his earning the "realm of spirit," is what gives order and unity to the latter part of the play? Are we given in any way to understand that the attainment of "needful spiritual insight" is an ultimate end, or even a consolation? Why, if this is his end, does Lear cry out, over Cordelia's body:

This feather stirs; she lives! If it be so,
It is a chance which does redeem all sorrows
That ever I have felt.

What, if some inner structure tending toward salvation is the unifying principle, is the sense of Kent's lines,

That from your first of difference and decay
Have followed your sad steps,

and his chilling words, "All's cheerless, dark, and deadly"? Why does Albany refer to Lear as "this great decay," and why does Kent, as Lear dies, say "Break, heart; I prithee break!"? And finally, not to prolong the list indefinitely, how is Mr. Heilman's etherealized conception of Lear's end compatible with the speech in which Kent adjures Edgar against attempting to revive the king:

Vex not his ghost. O, let him pass! He hates him
much
That would upon the rack of this tough world
Stretch him out longer.

Our present business, says Albany, is "general woe." Could Shakespeare have written a final scene—let alone the rest of the play—in which the comments of all the characters so obviously contradicted the effect he wished to produce?¹⁷ To suppose so is both to take a very low view of Shakespeare's art and to disregard completely the necessities of popular drama-turgy.¹⁸ Surely it is more consistent—with the

text, with what we know of tragedy and of the conditions of Elizabethan theatrical practice, and with the mass of critical opinion about *King Lear*—to regard Lear's imaginative insights as occasioned by and directed toward his need for love and happiness with Cordelia, and to be moved by the awful irony of Lear's return to his original majesty, to an even greater majesty because it is now joined to a deep awareness of his humanity as well, precisely when it is too late for him to achieve that which alone makes majesty, authority, even humanity, meaningful and valuable to him. If, as we watch Lear's final agony over the body of Cordelia, we ascend to a higher level, on which the general woe becomes ineffable joy and the surcease of pain becomes the attainment of "the realities necessary to survival," what happens to Shakespeare's play? It recedes into the background, becoming not so much the concrete object which controls and dictates our emotions as the occasion for reflections and feelings embracing it and much

¹⁸ The interpretation of *King Lear*, to judge from the absence in Mr. Heilman's book of any consideration of its status as a work of popular dramatic art, stands in no need of guidance or control from a knowledge of its literary milieu. While we know too little about Elizabethan audiences to justify any positive inferences as to the kinds of artistic structure and effect possible in works written for their immediate entertainment, one very important negative inference can be drawn. We must conclude, surely, that the basic structure and effect of a play written by a successful practicing dramatist for popular exhibition is of such a sort as could be grasped during a performance by a possible audience—and the possible can, for our present purpose, be drawn just as exclusively from among the judicious as Mr. Heilman wishes. That *King Lear* as he reads it does not meet this test can be shown most simply from the fact that a large number of readers—not just spectators—of the most refined sensitivity—not just ordinary Elizabethan playgoers—have studied—not merely witnessed—*King Lear* for three hundred years without perceiving the structure that Mr. Heilman now for the first time discloses to us. No spectator could possibly hope to "follow" the play as Mr. Heilman, with his leisure to trace evanescent coincidences of words, his note cards, his opportunity to extract every last drop of ambiguity from a line, is able to do; who but a scholiast in his study could notice that Albany's line at Act IV, scene 2, l. 62 "picks up" a couple of lines uttered by Cordelia, all unsuspecting, at Act I, scene 1, ll. 283–84? The alternatives, when we consider *King Lear* as a play written for an audience, seem to me clear: Shakespeare was fooling his audience, or he was completely unsuccessful, or three centuries of readers and critics have been in error, or Professor Heilman is reading some other play.

¹⁷ In comparison to the amplitude of his treatment of the first four acts, to Act IV, scene 6, which is for him the structural center of the play (pp. 173–222, *passim*), Mr. Heilman's discussion of the last four scenes is very sketchy indeed, perhaps because the inner reverberations of meaning sound so hollow there.

more besides.¹⁹ It may be that, in contemplation of the play as a whole, in mulling it over after it has done its work and after our emotions have returned from their painful excitement to an equilibrium, we shall decide, each according to his own philosophic or religious lights, that *King Lear* has for us a further significance, constitutes a spiritual affirmation, or even, as some have thought, is defective in the distance at which it lies from a realization of man's spiritual possibilities. But these are speculations occasioned by the reading of *King Lear* but in no way the effects peculiar to it—interesting, perhaps even valuable if they come from a sophisticated and philosophic mind—but not analyses of the play; for they base themselves on a reification of Lear and the others in a different and broader context, a context which, like Professor Heilman's, is derived from the moral and philosophic assumptions of the speculator rather than from the limited—and hence more concentrated, more powerful—confines of Shakespeare's play.

And this leads to a final objection to Mr. Heilman's book, an objection which is logically prior to all the others but which I have reserved until now in order not to prejudice the discussion. It is that Professor Heilman nowhere confronts—indeed, nowhere shows any explicit awareness of the need to confront—the logical responsibility imposed upon him by his basic assumption, that the proper reading of *King Lear* must be a symbolic reading. Nothing in the text of the play, nothing in Shakespeare's habits as a dramatist, nothing in the circumstances of its composition and production, nothing in Elizabethan dramatic practice in general, nothing in the dramatic criticism of Shakespeare's day—nothing, in short, internal or external, suggests, or has been thought until recent years to suggest, that a literal reading of *King Lear* will fail to account for essential features of the play and that the tragedy must be interpreted, therefore, as an organized body of symbols. Anyone who wishes to take this position is, of course, free to do so; but he must discharge the initial critical and logical responsi-

bility of showing his assumption to be needful and relevant, by making it clear that the play, literally interpreted, is inadequate to the author's intention as revealed in the details of the work. It is not enough to argue—as Professor Heilman seems to do (p. 12, and by implication, throughout the book)—that a symbolic reading is justified if it is consistent or makes sense of the work or accounts for its principal features; this is to beg the question, for, given sufficient imagination and verbal ingenuity in the critic, any work can be given such a reading. The necessity of symbolic interpretation must be established independently of the interpretation itself. It has long been thought by scholars—who, whatever their critical deficiencies, have usually had some competence in logic and a broad enough reading to know that some works are symbolic and some not—a necessary preliminary to symbolic interpretation to demonstrate quite concretely the need for it for the full understanding of a particular work. The body of criticism on, for example, *Gulliver's travels*, *The pilgrim's progress*, and *A game at chess* involves in a fundamental way such an analysis of the signs from which the inadequacy of a literal, and the resultant necessity for a symbolic, interpretation can be inferred. Professor Heilman—save in the childishly simple alternatives which he from time to time presents to us for rejection in favor of his own allegorism—shows no awareness of his obligations here. The tendency of much modern criticism—perhaps encouraged by the tendency of such modern writers as Kafka, Brecht, and Broch to write symbolic works—is to begin with the assumption, taken as self-evident or requiring only passing justification, that a symbolic reading is appropriate to any work. But it is obvious to anyone who knows anything of the comments of writers on their own work or of the history of criticism in general and the critical discussion of allegory in particular that this assumption is not in all cases true. It must therefore be given fresh and particular justification as a preliminary to each application. When it is not given, we may respect the sincerity or marvel at the industry and ingenuity displayed in the analysis, but we need not take it seriously.

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¹⁹ For a general discussion of the effect of religious or abstract moral thought on tragedy see E. E. Stoll, *Shakespeare and other masters* (Cambridge, Mass., 1940), pp. 75-78.

BOOK REVIEWS

Le Lai de l'ombre. By JEHAN RENART. Edited by JOHN ORR. ("Edinburgh University publications, language and literature texts," No. 1.) Edinburgh: The University Press, 1948. Pp. xxiv+90.

Le Lai de l'ombre is a gem of Old French literature which reveals admirably the tenets and ideals of medieval aristocracy. The choice of that psychological poem to launch the series augurs well for the future of the Edinburgh University Press. The fact that Professor Orr has devoted 36 pages of editorial notes and 21 pages of vocabulary to the 962 octosyllables is ample proof of his painstaking effort; but the announcement on the flyleaf to the effect that "this version is based on a hitherto neglected manuscript" calls for comment.

The seven manuscripts, all of which are extant in the Bibliothèque Nationale of Paris, bear the sigla of the first seven letters. Orr's version is based on E. He lists the five earlier editions: A by Michel in 1836; the composite edition, which gives priority to A, by Joseph Bédier in 1890; his edition of A in 1913; his edition of E in *Romania*, Vol. LIV (1928), which was reprinted as a separate pamphlet in 1929; the edition of F by Jubinal in 1846. Orr fails to mention the reproduction of A in 1932 by Omont in *Fabliaux, dits et contes*, and that of D in 1934 by Faral in *Le Manuscrit 19152 du fonds français de la Bibliothèque Nationale*. He also neglects to tell the reader that E follows the order of folios 54, 55, 57, 56, 58, 59, and 61 in manuscript 1104 of the *nouvelles acquisitions françaises*.

The old *stemma codicum* presented four families as determined by variants and lacunae: E, DF, AB, and CG. Only C can be eliminated for the extrinsic reason of its having been composed in the fourteenth century. It follows, inasmuch as E, F, and A are already printed, that Orr might have considered editing G rather than E. To be sure, G smacks of Picard origin, but so does *Guillaume de Dole*.

The choice of G would have been highly desirable in the case of *Le Lai de l'ombre*, which, after being edited unscientifically in the nineteenth century, served to revolutionize the art of editing old texts. Bédier has demonstrated that a *varia lectio* is not necessarily to be attributed to the amanuensis and that, anent the identification of the writer of a manuscript, "nul ne pourra jamais ruiner l'hypothèse que ce reviseur et Jean Renart ne font qu'un."

The last sentence of the Introduction is baffling. Orr asserts that he has introduced thirty-seven alterations into the text of E, and he contrasts that number with the forty-five which he counted in Bédier's edition of A (where they are grouped as thirty-four on pp. xlii-xliv). It is indeed strange that Orr did not contrast his thirty-seven in E with the twenty-six in Bédier's edition of E. Twenty-one of those twenty-six are retained by Orr, including lines 151 and 544, where italics are lacking. He alters sixteen other lines: 5, 14, 27, 34, 93, 232, 270, 311, 498, 759, 780, 795, 859, 868, 947, 952. Aside from those emendations, I am of the opinion that Bédier's readings in lines 152, 272, 369, 375, 515, 517, 521, and 822 are fully as tenable as Orr's. The change in line 83 can be obviated by removing the colon printed in Bédier's text and thereby producing an enjambement. As for line 812, it is omitted in CEG; in a note Orr quotes it from BDF, but not from A, which served as the source for Bédier.

Orr used constantly the glossary which Bédier composed for A in accordance with the standards of the Société des anciens textes français. It seems, however, that he did not know that it had been revised and adapted to the interpretation of E in *Romania*, LVIII (1932), 436-41. In that article he could have found a defense of the manuscript reading for lines 157 and 932; his own punctuation for lines 94, 103, 427, 640, and 654; and many interpretations in vocabulary.

Thereby Orr could have been more precise in the case of *avec* 488; *s'avoir* 71; *baillieu* 121; *covenir* 951; *dont* ne 698; *emparlé* 68; *eslire* 43; *Estil* 41 (see also Godefroy, *Dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue française*, III, 484a; Vigneras, *MP*, XXX [1933], 357); *estraint* 836 (Schultz-Gora, *Arch. Stud. neu. Spr.*, CLXIV [1933], 46); *estre* 77; *ferir* 717; *legier* 109; *manier* 544; *miaus* 284 (*Pelerinage de Charlemagne* 310; *Berte aus grans piés* 2711; *Faits des Romains*, p. 268, l. 27; *PQ*, XIV [1935], 259); *tot a un mot* 884 (three more examples are taken from *La Vie de Saint Léonard* by Le Verdier in *Le Livre du champ d'or* [Rouen, 1895], p. 242, from *Des lois et coutumes de Saint Amand* by Meijers and Salverda de Grave [Haarlem, 1934], p. 39, and from *Robert le Diable* by Tilander, *Romania*, LXIV [1938], 377); *chanter de Renart* 815 (as additional bibliography, see *Sire Hains et Dame Anuieuse* 230; Vitu, *Le Jargon du quinzième siècle* [Paris, 1884], p. 185; Schwob, *Mém. Soc. ling. Paris*, VII [1892], 317; Tobler-Lommatzsch, *Altfranzösisches Wörterbuch*, I, 1254); *rimer* 46; *rive* 47; *souffrain* 272 (*La Bataille de Caresme et de Charnage* 237; Jeanroy, *Romania*, LXIII [1914], 252); *soutis* 623; *venir* 450. A few other terms can be made more explicit: *amender* 660: "expédier, accélérer" (Tobler-Lommatzsch, I, 335; Schultz-Gora, *Arch. Stud. neu. Spr.*, CLXXI [1937], 64); *aumosne* 505: "mérite acquis par une action pieuse"; *enresdie* 821: "fol entêtement, extravagance"; *esfacié* 866: "durci, ankylosé" (Tobler-Lommatzsch, III, 1037); *hautesce* 41: "haute dignité"; *ce est du mains* 947: "cela va de soi, c'est tout naturel" (*Escoufle*, p. 300; *Renart et Piauoué*, XIII, 10; *Jeu de Saint Nicolas* 732; *Brunain* 69; *Gliglois*, 2102; *Li Proverbe au vilain* 142; François Villon, *Lais* 256; Gui de Cambrai, *Balaham et Josaphas* 7000; Philippe de Remi, *La Manekine* 474; Schultz-Gora, *Arch. Stud. neu. Spr.*, CLVII [1930], 61); *point* 684: "une petite quantité, le moins"; *tant maint* 566: "tant" (*Li Proverbe au vilain* 95; *Li Abecés par ekivoche* 6; *Li Ave Maria en roumans* 170; *La Vie de Saint Quentin* 2874); *mener tendant* 392: "traiter rudement" (*La Curne de Sainte-Palaye*, *Dictionnaire historique de l'ancien langage français*, X,

25a; Henry, *L'Oeuvre lyrique d'Henri III*, p. 94). Attention has been called to the peculiar syntax in lines 19, 60, 255, 508, 587, and 667 of *Le Lai de l'ombre* by E. Roszak, *Arch. Rom.*, XVI (1932), 167-70.

Orr refers the reader to pages 463-65 of Rita Lejeune-Dehousse's *L'Œuvre de Jean Renart* (Liège, 1935) for an extensive bibliography on the poet. It might be noted that four titles have been added to it by V. F. Koenig, *MP*, XXXIII (1936), 320, and that she inserted a similar bibliography in *Le Roman de la rose ou de Guillaume de Dole* (Paris, 1936), pp. xvii-xix. Furthermore, pertinent articles have appeared subsequently: L. A. Vigneras, "Sur la date de Guillaume de Dole," *RR*, XXVIII (1937), 109-21, "Notes sur Guillaume de Dole," *MLN*, LII (1937), 87-89, and "Notes sur Jean Renart," *ibid.*, LIV (1939), 262-66; Koenig, "Counter-notes on Jean Renart," *ibid.*, LV (1940), 8-16, and "Guillaume de Dole and Guillaume de Nevers," *MP*, XLV (1948), 145-51; G. Charlier, "Jean Renart et le fabliau d'Auberee," *Rom. Phil.*, I (1948), 243-50.

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Studies in the literary backgrounds of English radicalism with special reference to the French Revolution. By M. RAY ADAMS. ("Franklin and Marshall studies," No. 5.) Lancaster, Pa.: Franklin and Marshall College, 1947.

One turns to this book without quite knowing from the title what to expect and finishes it with feelings of vague dissatisfaction over the relation between title and content. This is not due to any absolute inappropriateness of the one to the other so much as to the fact that the title suggests several things that the book is not and that the reader is put to rather more than the customary effort to see what its applicability is. English radicalism in the age of the French Revolution certainly had literary backgrounds, but anyone who expects to find a treatment of antecedent literary currents will discover nothing of the sort. Likewise disappointed will be those who assume that

the author is concerned with the great figures who gave literary expression to revolutionary ideas or who produced works of literary value which contributed to the formulation or development of radical political doctrine. What the book does is to deal with minor literary figures who lived and wrote at the same time as the authors of the principal expressions of literary radicalism, and it is in the sense of designating coincident and accompanying phenomena of major manifestations that the word "backgrounds" in the title is used. The book consists of a series of studies of more or less faded luminaries of the period—Joel Barlow, Mary Hays, Mrs. Robinson, the Pantisocratists Lovell and Burnett, James Mackintosh, Joseph Fawcett, George Dyer, and that pretentious trimmer, Samuel Parr. Such writers as Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft, Paine, and Thelwall are omitted on the same ground as even more important figures—that they have received a good deal of attention elsewhere. Indeed, the author tells us that a major principle of inclusion was the degree of the neglect accorded a figure by previous writers. He would not maintain, of course, that all his subjects have been equally neglected, and he is scrupulous in acknowledging the instances in which, as in the cases of Barlow and Mackintosh, important contributions have been made by previous scholars. Each of the figures dealt with is treated in a separate study, which is described as being "literary," rather than social, political, or historical in character, though actually it is all these things. By a "literary" study the author means an essay combining biographical information, some analysis of the subject's works, and comments on matters of style and form and other aspects of literary values. The result is a book in which "the stress has been thrown upon personalities rather than upon movements as such" and upon "the interpenetration of subject matter and personality rather than upon subject matter itself."

The idea of writing on the minor literary radicals of the period is certainly a valid one—a book on this subject, in fact, has long been needed—and within the limits of the method

employed there is much that is valuable and useful. The minor Pantisocratists become persons rather than mere names in biographies of Coleridge and his more important associates, and the resurrection of George Dyer in one of the best chapters is a considerable feat. An essay on Joseph Fawcett, the ubiquitous preacher, adds appreciably to our knowledge of his later years and corrects long-standing misapprehensions. The chapters on Mackintosh and Barlow provide estimates of the less commonly treated aspects of their careers. These are substantial accomplishments, and they are the more valuable because they bring together materials widely scattered and not easily accessible. In a number of places, however, one cannot help wishing that the author's method had permitted fuller and less general treatment of ideas as ideas and that more attention had been paid to their contemporary relations. It is not enough to make passing allusions to Mackintosh's views on standing armies and to the same writer's and Dyer's references to Gothic political institutions. Such attitudes reflect complicated bodies of opinion in terms of which alone the views of any single writer can be properly elucidated. Even the rather considerable discussion of Fawcett's attitude toward war suffers at times from a certain generality of statement and a shying-away from exact analysis in the comparison of that worthy's opinions with those of other writers. One could wish, too, that the author had not left completely unexplored such tempting leads as Dyer's praise of Milton and Sydney and the statement in a biography of 1808 that Mackintosh was also indebted to them.

There is a valuable bibliography. The index is inadequate in the listing of ideas and subjects. A rash of misprints—three on page 169—occurs between pages 135 and 170.

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Matthew Arnold: A study. By E. K. CHAMBERS. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947. Pp. 144.

The purpose of Sir Edmund Chambers was to provide a simple, brief, and readable ac-

count of Matthew Arnold's life and works. There had been no such general introductory book since the appearance in 1931 of C. H. Harvey's *Matthew Arnold, a critic of the Victorian period*, which falls short of high quality and, moreover, sacrifices the poetry to the prose. Since 1931, notable new material has come into print, chiefly by the labors of Chauncey B. Tinker and Howard F. Lowry. Sir Edmund has drawn extensively and skillfully on their studies (as well as on a few recent critical interpretations) and is thus able to furnish the most nearly satisfactory introduction now available to the facts of Arnold's personal and literary career.

The chapters on the prose are less rewarding than those on the poetry. So far as they offer interpretation, they suffer from Sir Edmund's failure to use Lionel Trilling's *Matthew Arnold* (1939), to which no reference is made. Use of Dover Wilson's admirable edition of *Culture and anarchy* (1932) would have enabled Sir Edmund to remove the "perhaps" from this unsatisfactory remark on the first chapter of that book: "So far the original lecture, perhaps after some revision" (p. 88). Use of the reviewer's *Studies in the text of Matthew Arnold's prose works* (1935) would have precluded the erroneous statement (p. 94) that *Literature and dogma* "ran through 1872" in the *Cornhill*. Two instalments appeared in 1871; publication was then abruptly suspended, the biblical material being too explosive for that staid magazine.¹

Sir Edmund makes a more determined effort than any previous writer to discover the topics and dates of Arnold's Oxford lectures. Some of his indications are mistaken. The last lecture on Homer came in November, 1861, not in March, 1862, the ambiguous reference on which Sir Edmund is depending (*Letters of Matthew Arnold* [London, 1895], I, 169) having misled him; the March lecture was on Dante. The large majority at Arnold's first election is mentioned (p. 66); it is worth noting that his re-election, on June 5, 1862, was uncontested (*Times*, June 6, 1862). The lecture on Heine

was the second in 1863, not the first; and the lecture on Joubert the third, not the second. The lecture on the "Function of criticism" was the third in 1864, not the second. Arnold's final lecture from the Oxford chair is said (p. 84) to have been delivered on June 8, 1867; but it is evident in a letter of June 4 (*Letters*, I, 364) that the lecture had already been given; and there are other reasons for assigning June 1 as the day when Arnold spoke from the chair for the last time.²

In an appendix on the Arnold pedigree and elsewhere Sir Edmund brings together facts about the Arnold family not to be found in any single preceding book. The addition of this section was a happy thought. In the appendix he states that Jane Martha, the sister whom Arnold called "K," was born in 1821, the year before her famous brother; but earlier (p. 2) he has called Matthew, Dr. Arnold's eldest child. The statement in the appendix is correct; "K" could not have been born before 1821—the Arnolds were married in August, 1820—and Mrs. Humphry Ward, if not always strictly accurate in dates, is an excellent authority as to which of the elder generation was the first-born (*A writer's recollections* [New York, 1918], I, 52). It is odd to find the notation below Humphry Ward's name that he was "app. alive 1917" (p. 136), when it was one of the great griefs of Mrs. Ward's last months in 1920, that her husband underwent a serious operation and could not be with her (Janet Trevelyan, *Life of Mrs. Humphry Ward* [New York, 1923], p. 306). Ward died in 1926. W. T. Arnold, Mrs. Ward's brother, is curiously described as "alive 1880"; he died in 1904 (*ibid.*, pp. 179–81). Fanny, wife of Matthew's brother William, is noted as "ob. 1850"; she was living in 1856 (*Unpublished letters of Matthew Arnold*, ed. A. Whitridge [New Haven, 1923], p. 34) and is said by Mrs. Ward to have died in 1858–59 (*A writer's recollections*, I, 92). Matthew Arnold's sister Susan, noted as "alive 1884," outlived him; he was staying with her in Liverpool when he suffered his fatal attack (*Times*, April 17, 1888). Richard, the one son to survive him, was born not in 1853 but in

¹ An unpublished letter from Sir Leslie Stephen to George Smith, kindly communicated to me by Professor Richard L. Purdy, establishes with certainty the reason for the suspension of the series.

² The sources for the statements about the Oxford lectures are indicated in my *Matthew Arnold: A study in conflict* (Chicago, 1948), pp. 197–99.

1855 (*Letters*, I, 48, 56). There are other incomplete or unnecessarily vague entries in the pedigree.³

The most interesting of Sir Edmund's remarks on Arnold's poems is a suggestion for dating "Resignation" some years later than 1843, the time preferred by Tinker and Lowry. His argument is impressive, although not decisive. Sir Edmund now considers that fewer of the love poems related to Marguerite than he once believed. It is a disappointment to find him agreeing with all earlier critics who have attempted to distinguish between the poems inspired by Marguerite and those inspired by Arnold's wife that if a love poem does not re-

late to one of them it relates to the other. Our knowledge of Arnold's emotional life is very slight; and there is nothing in what we do know to suggest, much less establish, that these were the only two women who appealed to his heart.

The critical contribution is small. In the main, Sir Edmund offers sympathetic and compact expositions of the ideas in the poems and the prose and, in dealing with the poems, makes some acute remarks on details of form. But when he passes from interpretation to judgment the effect is jarring. The judicial statements are painfully brief, and they seldom go beyond an impression. But they will in no way impede the book from serving, as it was intended to serve, as a straightforward, fair, and cordial introduction to the facts about Arnold.

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³ By the kindness of the Vicar of Laleham, Rev. E. John Collinson, I am able to add the dates of Mrs. Matthew Arnold's birth and death: September 16, 1825—June 29, 1901.

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